

Israel destroys two Palestinian homes

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli army destroyed Wednesday a building with two apartments in which a total of 12 Palestinians lived in the Al Ram area north of Jerusalem, Palestinian sources said. The army knocked down the building belonging to Mr. Izzat Jabari because it was "constructed without a permit," the sources said. The demolition came about 24 hours after the army destroyed a house in the West Bank city of Hebron for similar reasons. Israel has destroyed more than 60 Palestinian homes in the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem since last August as part of a campaign to stop construction Israel considers "illegal." The Palestinians say Israel rarely grants construction permits.

Jordan Times

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In reference to U.S. double standard policies in Mideast King urges Arabs to address the world with a unified tone

ABU DHABI (Agencies)

— His Majesty King Hussein has expressed satisfaction with the U.N.-Iraq accord on arms inspection but urged Iraq to abide by U.N. resolutions to help ease the suffering of the Iraqi people and open the way for a direct dialogue with the U.S.

Addressing a meeting with Arab countries' ambassadors to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Abu Dhabi, King Hussein expressed hope that "the world will deal with our Arab issues by the same criteria as it deals with problems elsewhere in the world."

"Arab states should adopt a unified tone to clarify to the whole world that global interests necessitate the adoption of standards in all cases," the King told the Arab envoys.

"The crises that the Arab Nation is passing through raises questions about the joint Arab position which could safeguard our rights and defend our causes," the King added.

Diplomats who attended the meeting at the presidential palace in Abu Dhabi

said the King was referring to the tough U.S. stand against Iraq to force it to implement U.N. resolutions on arms inspections.

The U.S. came under fire in the Arab World for threatening to launch military strikes against Iraq last month, before Baghdad signed a deal with the U.N. on Feb. 23 defusing the crisis on inspections.

The Arab countries argue that Washington has not taken the same tough stand against its ally Israel, which they accuse of sabotaging the Middle East peace process sponsored by the U.S.

King Hussein discussed ending a Gulf war rift with the 22-member Arab League during talks here on Tuesday with the UAE president, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan.

The King who was to fly to Oman later Wednesday said the standoff between Iraq and U.N. could have been averted if Baghdad had complied in full with U.N. Security Council resolutions.

His calls for direct dialogue between Washington and Baghdad were aiming



His Majesty King Hussein and UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan smile on the King's arrival in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday (Reuters photo)

at easing the suffering of the Iraqis by clearing the way for lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. "A dialogue is the best solution instead of following a detective style, arms inspections," the King said.

"If we want to finish with the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, a dialogue could lead to an understanding that is acceptable and binding to all," said the King. King Hussein made it clear that he was not

requested by anyone or any party to help achieve such a dialogue and that he was motivated only by the need to end the suffering of the Iraqis.

He said the Iraqis have

(Continued on page 7)

Cabinet commits to forge ahead with privatisation

By Fairouz Abu Ghazaleh and Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporters

AMMAN — The government on Wednesday said it was committed to forge ahead with privatisation efforts aimed at enhancing Jordan's economic performance and competitiveness by improving the quality of products and services at reduced prices.

"Through privatisation, the government aims at increasing efficiency, improving the competitiveness of Jordan's economy as well as attracting local and foreign investments," Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jawad Anani told the Lower House during yesterday's public session. "Privatisation means increasing investments rather than replacing them [with local ones]."

Jordan's comprehensive privatisation strategy, which picked up momentum two years ago, is aimed at increasing the role of the private sector and reducing the government's direct participation in the productive sectors in a bid to target state efforts towards combating poverty and unemployment.

The government has launched a five-year social and economic development

plan this year, which has details for a multi-million-dollar Social Productivity Programme that aims at easing the impact of economic reforms on Jordan's poor and unemployed.

Dr. Anani, head of the Higher Ministerial Privatisation Committee, told the House that the government plans to sell 40 per cent of Jordan Telecommunications Corporation (JTC) equity to a strategic investor as a first step.

The government has this month shortlisted four foreign firms, which were in a neck-tight race to win the profit-generating JTC bid. The final decision is

expected to be announced by June or July.

The partial sale of JTC — transformed into a company in 1996 — will make Jordan the first Arab state to allow private foreign ownership of its fixed network, while retaining a JTC monopoly on the operation of fixed lines till the year 2002.

According to analysts, the pioneering sale could bolster Jordan's investor image — until now hurt by the slow pace of the country's privatisation.

According to Dr. Anani, (Continued on page 7)

50 deputies demand the release of Ma'an detainees

AMMAN (J.T.) — More than half the number of Lower House deputies on Wednesday urged the government to release all the people who were arrested in the southern town of Ma'an, following a week-long curfew imposed on its 30,000 inhabitants. "We ask the government to release all those arrested in Ma'an, not to arrest any more people and to close this chapter forever in order to preserve the country's security and stability," said the petition, signed by 50 deputies. The army pulled out of Ma'an last Saturday ending a six-day curfew, which followed two days of riots sparked by pro-Iraqi demonstrations. One man was killed and over 20 injured in clashes between demonstrators and police on Feb. 20 and 21. At least 44 people were interrogated for their alleged involvement in the demonstrations and clashes with police. The government said that it will either release some of the detainees after the completion of the investigations or will take them to court.

Syria to free 130 Lebanese detainees

BEIRUT (AFP) — About 130 Lebanese nationals, detained in Syria since Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, will be released within 48 hours, government officials said.

Some 25 others who were tried and found guilty of spying for Israel will remain in prison in Syria, the officials said.

The measure was announced after a telephone contact between Lebanese President Elias Hrawi and his Syrian counterpart Hafez Assad, they said.

"Hrawi has thanked Assad for his efforts and given instructions to the concerned Lebanese authorities to receive the freed detainees at the Lebanese-Syrian borders," one official said.

Human rights groups, including Amnesty International and the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, have called for the release of Lebanese "held without charges or trial for several years" in Syrian prisons and asked for publishing lists of the detained persons. Amnesty estimated their number at 200.

In October, relatives of the Lebanese detained in Syria formed a committee and called on the Beirut government to seek their release or trial in Lebanese courts.

Dufourcq meets Iraqi president; says lifting of sanctions possible after compliance with resolutions

Combined agency dispatches

A FRENCH envoy met Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Wednesday to deliver a message from French President Jacques Chirac on Iraqi compliance with the latest U.N. resolution on weapons inspections.

Bertrand Dufourcq, the foreign ministry director-general, met the Iraqi president after two hours of talks in Baghdad with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. French diplomats said.

French foreign ministry spokeswoman Anne Gazeau-Secret said Mr. Dufourcq would "underline the importance France attaches to the full and rapid implementation of the accord struck in Baghdad on February 23" between U.N. chief Kofi Annan and Mr. Aziz on granting U.N. weapons experts access to Iraq's presidential palaces.

"Dufourcq will reiterate to the Iraqi authorities that Iraq must reintegrate into the international community, which means it must respect its rules," she said in Paris.

"He will reiterate the possibility of lifting sanctions

as soon as Baghdad fulfils its obligations in eliminating weapons of mass destruction," she said, referring to the U.N. sanctions in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Mr. Annan said Tuesday that most U.N. Security Council members feel they should decide whether military action should be taken if Iraq fails to comply with its commitments.

"Most members of the council would feel that the serious consequences must be discussed by the council before some action is taken," the U.N. secretary general said on CNN Television. The 15 Security Council members on Monday unanimously approved a resolution warning Iraq of the "severest consequences" if it violated an accord on U.N. weapons inspections signed by Mr. Annan and Mr. Aziz in Baghdad on Feb. 23.

Washington insists the resolution gives the United States the right to respond with military force if Baghdad impedes U.N. weapons inspections. "The Security Council would prefer that they discuss it first," Mr. Annan said in a taped inter-

view. "But I think my own sense is that given what we've gone through, if Iraq were to break the agreement, perhaps it would be easier for the U.S. to get a consensus in the council next time round."

Meanwhile, in an effort to coordinate U.N. policies on Iraq, Mr. Annan is expected to name an Indian diplomat as his new special representative to communicate with Baghdad leaders, U.N. and diplomatic sources said.

The envoy, Prakash Sbah, was India's U.N. ambassador until a few months ago and has served in Japan and Malaysia. He will see Mr. Annan on Wednesday. U.N. officials said that Mr. Annan, after his recent trip to Baghdad, wanted a political adviser to help him coordinate the large U.N. operations in Iraq and keep open communication with the leadership there.

The United Nations currently has more than 425 people in the country, including arms inspectors and staff administering the oil-for-food programme. The secretary-general this

(Continued on page 7)

U.N. report blames Israel for many Palestinian economic woes

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's repeated security closures of the Palestinian territories and the stalled peace negotiations are the major factors stunting Palestinian economic growth, a U.N. report said Wednesday.

The United Nations, which surveyed 162 private institutions in the Palestinian areas for three years from mid-1994, said Israeli security measures were preventing the free flow of trade and people.

"Labour flows to Israel declined from about 120,000 on a monthly basis in 1992 to under 25,000 in 1996," said the survey, carried out by the U.N. office of the special coordinator in the occupied territories.

The closures also hampered marketing and access for Palestinian businesses and created technical and management difficulties, said the report.

The slow economic growth in the private sector stemmed from a lack of available credit and skilled workers, the report said.

The atmosphere in the region because of the deadlock in the peace process also caused a drop in investment both in the Palestinian territories and abroad by Palestinians.

According to the Palestinian statistics office, most of the private sector is composed of small businesses of less than three workers. The 50,250 small businesses employ 128,000 people and are responsible for 33.8 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The report called on the Palestinian National Authority to invest in the private sector and infrastructure, but also took into account that the Israeli closure meant most public funds had to go instead towards employing Palestinians.

Despite Netanyahu's opposition Weizman reelected

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's President Ezer Weizman was reelected by parliament for a second five-year term on Wednesday, defeating a right-wing challenger. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Weizman, 73, received the support of 62 deputies in the 120-member Knesset while his challenger, Shaul Amior, garnered 49 votes and there were seven blank ballots. Speaker Dan Tichon announced following the secret vote. One deputy did not participate in the poll.

To win the election in the first round, Mr. Weizman needed the votes of an absolute majority of the 120 deputies.

It was the first time in Israel's 50-year history that an incumbent president was challenged for reelection and Mr. Weizman's initial response to his victory was measured.

"I am happy, but I'm not jumping for joy," he told reporters. "I expected anywhere from 63 to 70 votes and got 63."

Mr. Weizman is highly popular with the Israeli public but



Israel's President Ezer Weizman talks to the press Wednesday during a news conference held at the president's residence shortly after he was reelected for another term (AP photo)

angered many in the ruling right-wing camp by pressing for more flexibility in peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

His politicisation of the once ceremonial post of president led Mr. Netanyahu to take the unprecedented step for an

Israeli prime minister of backing a rival candidate.

Despite the defeat, Mr. Amior's ability to garner 49 votes in parliament was seen as a political blow to Mr. Weizman and a relative

(Continued on page 2)

New Mossad chief named

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed Israel's ambassador to the European Union, Ephraim Halevy, to head the troubled Mossad spy agency on Wednesday, public television reported.

Mr. Netanyahu also appointed General Amiram Levine as Mossad number two, said the report.

The Israeli premier has called a press conference for later Wednesday to announce the appointments, said the television.

A spokesman for the prime minister's office declined to confirm the report, saying only that Mr. Netanyahu would make a statement

about the head of Mossad.

Israeli press reports said earlier Wednesday that Mr. Halevy, who served as deputy head of the Mossad in the early 1990s, would have overall responsibility for the foreign intelligence agency for a period of two years.

They added that he would then hand over to Gen. Levine, currently commander of the army in northern Israel and south Lebanon.

The former head of Mossad, Danny Yatom, resigned last week after a series of embarrassing incidents, notably a failed attempt to assassinate a Palestinian Islamist leader in Jordan.

Mr. Halevy, a British-born

64-year-old, served for nearly 30 years in the Mossad, specialising in relations with the security services of foreign states which had diplomatic relations with Israel.

He also played a central role in negotiations which led to the 1994 peace treaty.

Gen. Levine, 51, has served for the past three years as head of the army's northern command, which is responsible for troops deployed in the Israeli occupied buffer zone in south Lebanon.

He is considered most brilliant military case outsp.

'U.S. not interested in direct dialogue with Iraq'

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The U.S. has "no plans and no interest" in opening a direct dialogue with the Iraqi leadership, a senior American administration official said Wednesday.

"The problem is between the U.N. and Iraq, and not a bilateral dispute between the two countries," said Bruce Riedel, special assistant to U.S. President Bill Clinton and senior director for Near East and South Asia Affairs at the U.S. National Security Council.

"Iraq's obligations are to the [U.N.] Security Council and to the international community, it is not a matter between Iraq and the U.S.," Mr. Riedel reiterated.

The U.S. official was speaking at a Worldnet dialogue via satellite on "U.S. Policy and Regional Prospects After the Annan Agreement."

His Majesty King Hussein, who last week proposed that Iraq and the U.S. start dialogue, is currently in Oman after the United Arab Emirates (UAE), pushing for the Jordanian initiative in order to achieve long-term stability in the region after the recent U.N.-Iraq

standoff over weapons inspections.

King Hussein said his proposal was also aimed at easing the suffering of the Iraqi people by clearing the way for lifting crippling sanctions imposed on Baghdad since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"My call was prompted by the suffering of the Iraqi people... We should not give a chance to those who want to fish in dirty waters. I cannot speak on behalf of anybody," the King was quoted by international news agencies

(Continued on page 2)

Israel cancels Jerusalem residence permit of Palestinian legislator

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel cancelled the residency permit of a Palestinian legislator living in Arab east Jerusalem Wednesday, before later describing the decision as a "mistake" and reversing it.

Hatem Abdul Kader told AFP he had been summoned to the interior ministry and told his resident's permit had been cancelled and that he had to turn in his identity card.

"They didn't give me any reason for the action," he said. But interior ministry spokeswoman Tova Ellinson told AFP the decision to revoke Mr. Kader's permit was a mistake that had been quickly rectified.

"By mistake, he was told that he is no longer a resident. But after checking his file, we found he is a resident and can receive all services. No identification card was taken from him," she said.

Mr. Abdul Kader said in response that he would not

believe Ms. Ellinson until he had received proof in writing from the interior ministry.

Israel last year withdrew residency cards from several hundred of Palestinians living in Arab east Jerusalem, saying they had forfeited their right to the permits by living outside the city for extended periods of time.

Palestinians charge that Israel's aim is to lower the Arab population of the disputed city.

Mr. Abdul Kader, one of seven Arab east Jerusalem deputies in the 88-member Palestinian legislature, said he had refused to give up his identity card, which allows Arab east Jerusalem Arabs to travel freely in Israel and between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The permits also give Palestinians access to Israeli health care and other benefits.

"Nobody can kick me out of Jerusalem. It's Eli Suissa and Benyamin Netanyahu who should leave," Mr. Abdul

Kader said, referring to the Israeli interior minister and prime minister.

Mr. Abdul Kader, a 42-year-old member of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, said he would challenge the interior ministry's decision in Israel's supreme court if necessary.

Israeli authorities had been seeking for more than a year to curb Mr. Abdul Kader's political activities in Arab east Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in 1967.

In August 1996, police tried to close an office the legislator operates in his home to receive constituents on the grounds that it violated clauses of peace accords which bar Palestinian National Authority (PNA) from political activity in Jerusalem.

But the same peace accords, signed by Israel, permitted the election of deputies to the legislative council from Arab east Jerusalem and the government eventually dropped its overt efforts to close Mr.

Abdul Kader's office.

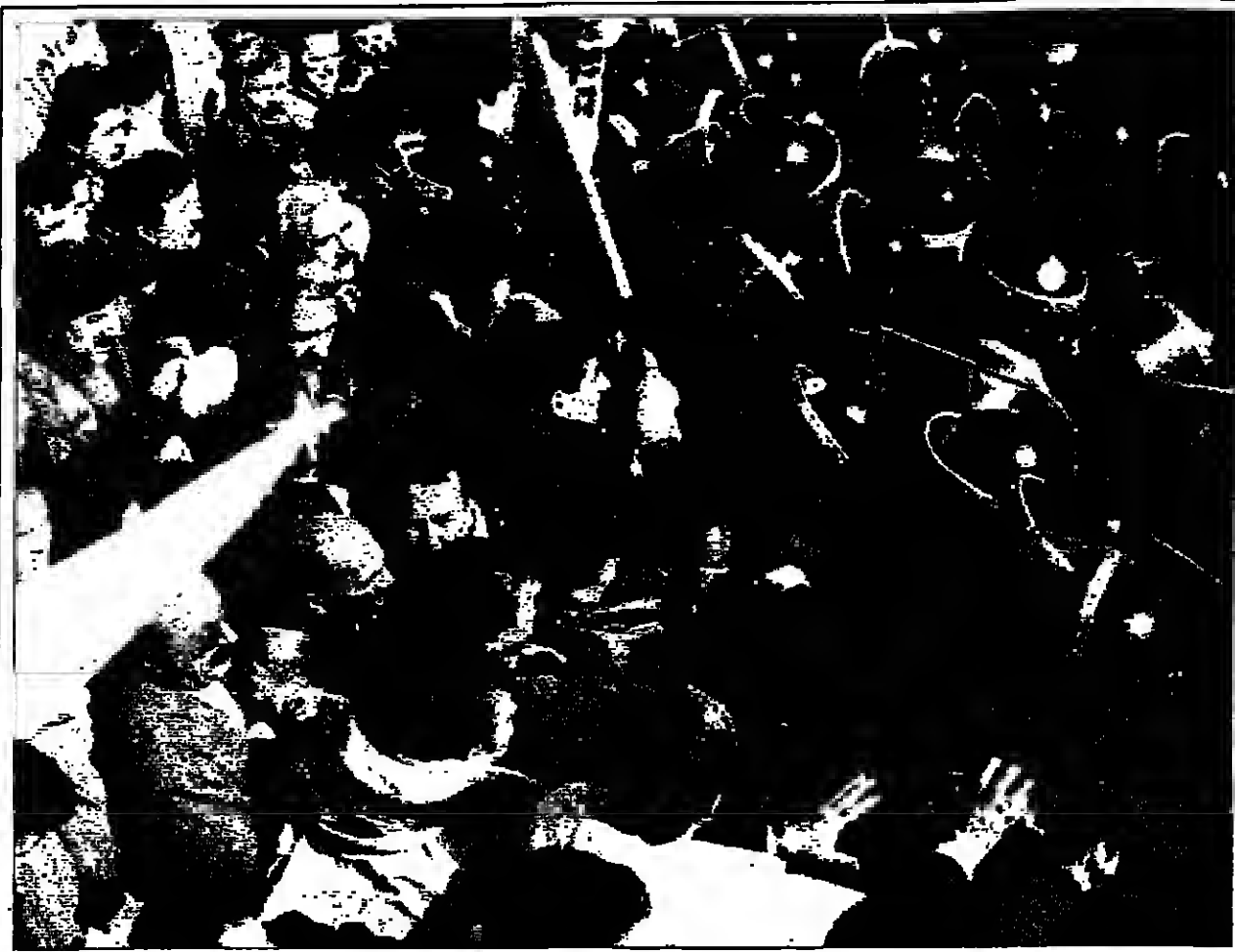
Last year municipal authorities confiscated the Palestinian's furniture on the grounds that he had failed to pay local property taxes, but he continued to operate his office.

Palestinians hope to make the eastern sector of the city the capital of a future independent state and Israel has promised to negotiate the city's status as part of the Oslo peace process.

But Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government has ruled out any changes to Israel's full control over the entire city.

A recent census conducted by the PNA put the Arab population of Arab east Jerusalem at 210,000. About 160,000 Jews have been settled in the sector since 1967.

Many Arabs, especially young families, have been forced to move into nearby suburbs in the West Bank because Israel refuses to grant them building permits for new homes in the city.



TURKISH WORKERS BATTLE RIOT POLICE: Turkish public workers Wednesday scuffle with riot police barricaded at the main square in central Ankara. Up to 7,000 protesters, chanting slogans and carrying banners, staged a protest against a government bill that they say erodes their union rights (Reuters photo)

U.N. chief Annan to visit Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan will visit Lebanon March 20 to open the new headquarters of a U.N. agency and discuss the Middle East peace process, Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bweiz said Wednesday.

Mr. Annan was due to attend the official inauguration of the new headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) during his two-day visit, he said.

"This visit will replace the one Annan was due to pay to Lebanon before the outbreak of the Iraqi crisis," Mr. Bweiz told reporters at the Foreign Ministry.

Mr. Annan had initially planned to visit Lebanon in February to attend the opening of the ESCWA headquarters in Beirut.

The U.N. regional agency — made up of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt, Yemen, the United Arab Emirates and a Palestinian representative — was previously based in Amman.

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'U.S. not interested in direct dialogue with Iraq'

(Continued from page 1)

yesterday as saying, without elaborating.

The King earlier said that Jordan's "direct dialogue" initiative was based on the fact that "direct dialogue between the concerned parties is far better and more productive than dealing through inspectors, monitors or following police-like methods."

Jordanian officials had said the initiative was expected to be the focus of an upcoming meeting between the King and Mr. Clinton, scheduled in Washington for mid-March.

Yesterday's remarks by Mr. Riedel were the first U.S. official reaction to the proposal.

Stressing that Iraq has to live up to its obligations and destroy its weapons of mass destruction, Mr. Riedel stated: "This is not a question about whether the U.S. and Iraq are talking to each other. It is a question about whether Iraq lives up to its obligations."

"[U.S.] President [George] Bush took the right decision and began 'desert storm' in order to expel the Iraqi forces from Kuwait. [U.S.] President Clinton will not hesitate if he feels that the responsible thing to do is to take [military] action in order to force Iraq to comply with the Security Council resolutions or if he feels that is the only way that we can keep the threat of Iraq's

weapons of mass destruction programme under control."

He said the U.S. believed it already had a U.N. mandate to take military actions against Iraq under U.N. Resolution 687 (1991), which authorised military action in 1991 under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter.

The mandate, he said, did not require the U.S. to coordinate with the other four permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — Russia, France, China, and Great Britain — before launching an attack against Iraq.

Iraq, he said, "is a U.S.-led military strike by striking an arms inspection deal with the U.N. ten days ago granting unlimited access to weapons sites."

It has maintained it would comply with the provisions of the deal in order to get sanctions lifted.

Official sources said Jordan intended to present its direct dialogue proposal to the Arab League to muster official support among its 22 members.

Jordan believes that any thaw in American-Iraqi ties, marked since the 1990 Gulf crisis that was sparked by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, could encourage Gulf Arab states to mend fences with Baghdad after an eight-year rupture.

'Mossad agents in Switzerland were on assassination mission'

From the Jerusalem Post

LONDON — The Mossad agents who were apprehended in Switzerland on February 19 were not on a phone-bugging mission, but were planning to assassinate two businessmen suspected of helping acquire biological and chemical weapons for Hizbollah, according to The London Times.

This, along with further revelations about internal dissent within the intelligence agency, was disclosed in an interview with an unnamed Mossad officer in the agency's Brussels-based European directorate, published Tuesday.

The officer told the paper the mission was to assassinate two businessmen suspected of helping Hizbollah acquire biological and chemical weapons from Eastern Europe and ship them to the Middle East via the Balkans.

The officer, added the Times, was interviewed in England and revealed that at least one member of the squad that bungled the attempt to assassinate Hamas activist Khaled

Misha'al in Amman last September was among the Mossad team apprehended in Switzerland.

The officer said one of the targets had been Abdullah Zein, whose telephone, according to the published "sanitised version," was in the process of being bugged when a suspicious neighbour called police to the building in the Bern suburb of Liebenfeld.

The officer said the operation was aimed at killing Mr. Zein, 32, a Shiite Muslim from south Lebanon who had lived in Switzerland for several years, as well as another businessman, using the same poison that had been used in the Misha'al attack.

The officer was quoted as saying: "The attempt on Misha'al's life failed when, instead of spraying the toxin into his ear, from where it should have travelled to the brain, causing haemorrhage and death within six to 18 hours, the poison struck his neck and collar." He added that "the Israeli spy [in Bern] was caught in possession of 'suspicious objects,' according to the Swiss police. It appears these were deadly aerosol sprays developed by Mossad chemists.

"When a bulb concealed in the palm of the hand is squeezed, a powerful nerve agent squirts through a nozzle protruding from the clenched fingers of the agent's fist," he said.

The officer said the Swiss operation had been approved by outgoing Mossad head Danny Yatom in an effort to salvage his reputation and that it had been opposed "root and branch" by career officers within the service. He said that was why a top Mossad field officer resigned abruptly last month and that the resignations of three senior operations officers would come soon.

The Times commented that, in making the disclosure, the "disgruntled" officer "appeared to be motivated by a desire to influence the appointment of Mr. Yatom's successor, now a subject of heated argument within Israel's defence establishment."

Bomb wounds three in Algiers

PARIS (R) — A bomb wounded three Algerians near a school in the capital Algiers on Wednesday, Algerian security forces said in a statement read on state radio.

The homemade bomb hidden in a bag exploded at 7:55 a.m. in the Djennat Hassane neighbourhood.

The statement did not say who was behind the bombing. It said the toll was provisional. No one

claimed responsibility for the bombing, which coincided with the sixth anniversary of the banning of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

The blast was the latest of a series in which thousands of civilians have died in the past five years.

Last week a bomb ripped through a bus, killing 16 people and wounding 16 in the Medea

region, 70 kilometres south of Algiers.

That attack took place shortly before President Liamine Zerrouk paid a rare visit to Medea, one of the most violence-ravaged provinces.

Mr. Zerrouk vowed to wipe out Islamists but urged Algerians to be patient as the killings would not end soon.

Weizman reelected

(Continued from page 1)

victory for the little-known backbencher deputy from Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party.

Mr. Weizman said he would not hold Mr. Netanyahu's opposition to his reelection against him.

"I have been working for two years with the prime minister and I think we will find a way to continue working together," he said.

The two men spoke by telephone shortly after the vote, and Mr. Netanyahu wished Mr. Weizman "Mabrouk" — con-

gratulations in Arabic — and expressed confidence the two men could cooperate effectively. In addition to the right-left divide, the battle between Mr. Weizman and Mr. Amor in many ways reflected the deep social and ethnic rifts in Israeli society.

He gradually distanced himself from the Labour Party in frustration at the constant bickering between the group's two top veterans, the late Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, and was elected president as a consensus candidate between left and right.

Mr. Amor for his part immigrated to Israel from Morocco in 1956 and climbed the political ladder to become mayor of Migdal Haemek, a small town near Haifa, and later a Likud member of parliament.

Mr. Amor unabashedly touted his background during the campaign, insisting that "someone who comes from the people can serve all the people."

Mr. Weizman bristled at the notion he could not represent all Israelis.

"We need to take ethnicity and religion out of this vote," he said earlier this week.

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

14:10 The Dinky Di's
14:30 The Animal Show
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 NBA
18:00 Drama — The Burned Bridge

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 French Programmes

19:30 News Headlines

19:35 Comedy — Big Brother Jack

20:00 Trivial Pursuit

20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn, the Medicine Woman

21:10 The Oprah Winfrey Show

22:00 News in English

22:25 Feature film — "Dead Boi"

23:59 Comedy — Never The Taiwan

00:30 End of T.X.

Friday Programmes

14:10 Cartoon — The Adventures of Tedy Ruxpin

14:30 Wishbone

15:00 French Programmes

17:00 He Shoots, He Scores

17:30 Doc. — Blue Water Dreaming

18:30 Tarzan

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 French Programmes

19:30 News Headlines

19:35 Friends

20:00 Documentary — Life on the Internet

20:30 The Album Chart Show

21:10 The Adventures of Brisco County

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

22:00 News in English

22:30 Mini-series: Mafia Marriage (Pt. II)

00:30 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:38 Fajr

05:55 (Sunrise) Duha

11:47 Dhuhur

15:05 'Asr

17:39 Maghreb

18:56 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweifish, Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366

Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811

St. Abram Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 8655897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541

Church of Presentation, Sweifish Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel. 8926799

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to rise slightly. Skies will be sunny to cloudy and winds easterly to southeasterly moderate. On Friday, skies will be partly cloudy, dusty, with a chance of rain particularly in the southern parts of the Kingdom. Winds will be southeasterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be dusty, skies partly cloudy, winds northerly active, and seas choppy.

Amman 05/18

Aqaba 03/19

Jordan Valley 10/24

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 16, Aqaba 23 Humidity readings: Amman 35 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mukhlis Mazahab 830425

Dr. Wissam Hayyari 748563

Dr. Munir Al Qasbi 799599

Dr. Khalid Abdo 4657129

Firas pharmacy 5661912

Ferdous pharmacy 778336

Al Asema pharmacy 4637055

Nairoukh pharmacy 4623672

Yacoub pharmacy 4644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Thammeh 250080

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Saffarini 987565

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade 4617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 4630321

Hotel Complaints 5605800

Price Complaints 5661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 771111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic Abdi 5666131/7

Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856856

Luzmila 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4642811/6

Akileh Maternity 4642441/2

Information technology training course begins

AMMAN (Petra) — Delegates from nine Arab countries Wednesday started a four-month advanced training course at the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) focusing on information technology.

Organised in conjunction with and financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the course consists of numerous topics such as relational database management systems, database administration, database designs, reliable

design, capacity design, system performance and project management, among others.

RSS President Said Alloush opened the course by saying that in this modern age of information, computer technology plays a vital role in people's economic, social and scientific life.

In an age of advanced technology and rapid scientific development, widespread use of the Internet and the advent of the electronic trading, it has become necessary to upgrade the efficiency and

skills of personnel involved in information technology so that they can better serve their nation and organisations, he said.

Referring to the RSS activities, Dr. Alloush said that in the past four years, the RSS has organised four such training courses, attended by 60 participants from 10 Arab countries.

The JICA representative in Jordan praised the Jordanian government's efforts in making these training courses successful, noting that

through the RSS, it has become possible to provide advanced training to personnel in the Arab region.

The RSS said the course, entitled "Systems Engineering," aims at introducing new skills to upgrade the participants' relevant knowledge in the field of information technology.

The participants originate from Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Yemen, Oman, Mauritania and Morocco, in addition to Jordan.

Interior ministry decides to allow longer stays for Muslim pilgrims

AMMAN (J.T.) — In a move seen as way to attract visitors to Jordan's archaeological and religious sites, Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid Wednesday announced that Muslim pilgrims in transit to Mecca can remain in the country for as long as they need to visit the Kingdom's holy shrines.

But in his announcement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the minister did not specify if the move applies to any particular Arab and Islamic countries.

The minister's announcement is seen as a departure from previous Jordanian policy, which only allowed pilgrims, especially those coming from the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, to stay overnight. As part of this policy, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs offered accommodation in Shuneh town in the central Jordan Valley, close to the King Hussein Bridge, to pilgrims on their way to or returning from Saudi Arabia.

Wednesday's announce-

ment followed a report on Tuesday that the Ministry of Interior has instructed the Jordanian embassy in Tehran to facilitate the entry of Iranian tourists into the Kingdom.

The minister said the new policy towards Tehran comes as a result of a new Iranian openness with the other nations, following the election of Mohammad Khatami as Iran's president and a visit to Tehran by HRH Crown Prince Hassan at the head of a delegation to the Islamic

summit meeting.

A senior Iranian government official who visited Jordan late last month said 20,000 Iranians visited Jordan in the past four months, adding that his country was planning to increase the number and help market the Kingdom as an Islamic tourist country.

Jordan features many places that would be of interest to Iranian tourists, such as the tomb of Ja'afar Ben Abi Taleb, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad.

New centre helps victims of domestic violence

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A new centre opened by the Public Security Department (PSD) is offering help to the most vulnerable sectors of society, battered wives and sexually and physically abused women and children.

The Family Protection Unit, officially inaugurated by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan last month, began receiving cases in September.

It is staffed by police officers specialised in the fields of sociology, psychology, and law, according to Major Hussein Sarhan, the head of the centre.

He said the unit "investigates and deals with" crimes committed within the family such as rape, incest, physical abuse and threats, as well as forcing women to engage in immoral acts, said Maj. Sarhan.

"The PSD is trying to change its routine procedures because it feels an urgent need to deal with victims of domestic violence," he told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

"The PSD is trying to implement a comprehensive social security concept within the community," he added.

Violence in Jordan has increased over the past five years because of rapid socio-economic and political changes and increasing poverty and unemployment, Maj. Sarhan explained.

The 1990 Gulf crisis also took its toll, forcing over 350,000 Jordanians to flee Kuwait and settle in the Kingdom, thus creating further social imbalances.

"Jordanian society is a dynamic one, which is shifting quickly from one stage to the other," Maj. Sarhan stressed.

"About half of the country's population are youths (below the age of 15) who are easily affected by the social changes and what they see on regular and satellite television," he said.

"These changes have inflicted psychological pressure on individuals and forced them to become more aggressive," added Maj. Sarhan, who has served in the PSD for the past 18 years.

According to a recent PSD study, 2,500 crimes, including murder, attempted murder, abduction, severe injury, molestation, rape and manslaughter, were committed against minors in the



Two social workers at the Family Protection Unit talk with a young victim of domestic violence. The unit is dedicated to fighting this type of crime (Photo by Rana Hussein)

Kingdom between 1993 and 1996. Similar crimes were inflicted on 1,573 women during the same period.

Another PSD study, prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1994, reported that a total of 4,962 cases of domestic violence against women were registered with the police between 1991 and 1992.

But social workers say the actual number could be higher, since many women fear reporting abuse by their husbands and families.

"Cultural and traditional concepts encourage many individuals to take the law into their own hands," said Maj. Sarhan.

He was referring to "crimes of honour," in which males take the life of their female relatives for either their involvement or suspected involvement in an affair with a man.

Around 26 to 30 women are killed in the Kingdom every year in what is termed "a crime of honour."

"Our investigations into these cases have proved that over 95 per cent of the reported honour killings were based only on suspicion or rumours, or to take revenge," Maj. Sarhan said.

"The problem is that the individuals who kill their female relatives are pervers who tarnish the true meaning of honour," he said.

Social workers say "lack of preventive punishment," including what is perceived as lenient sentences given to offenders under current laws, have encouraged crimes of honour.

The PSD unit has already handled almost 50 cases of violence against children and women, including cases in which families prevent women from leaving their homes.

"In each case, we try to find a reasonable solution for both the victim and the offender," Maj. Sarhan said.

"We do not have a ready prescription to solve cases," he added.

"Our trained officers deal with each case depending on its circumstances, and try to find alternative solutions depending on their social surroundings," he said.

In one recent case, Maj. Sarhan said a stepmother locked up and physically abused a seven-year-old child while his father was away at work.

"This child came to the centre and complained about the abuse after hearing about the facility from other children in the neighbourhood," he said.

"We managed to solve this problem peacefully," he said.

"With the cooperation of the Lancashire Police in England, we conducted several workshops and training courses for over 80 police officers at the unit," Maj. Sarhan said.

Two British instructors trained the officers on ways to investigate sensitive crimes, "because in the past, these issues were taboo and could not be discussed."

Years back, women could not serve as investigators and were limited to administrative matters.

"But now, we have several female investigators who

can deal better with women and children," Maj. Sarhan said.

"Our officers got the necessary training experience to operate the unit and deal with the cases based on the British experience, which benefited them greatly while taking into consideration our own culture and traditions," Maj. Sarhan explained.

The centre includes control rooms with video cameras to tape each case, "with the knowledge of the interviewee," he said.

"This method enables us to monitor the reaction of the victims, especially children. Later, these tapes could be sent to court as evidence without obliging them to appear in court," he said.

The unit also has a Forensic Medicine section, obviating the need to send victims of domestic violence to the National Institute for Forensic Medicine, "where the atmosphere of police and dead bodies is not appropriate for victims of domestic or sexual violence."

"Our aim is to protect the psychological aspect of the victims, since these are sensitive crimes and should remain private," he said.

The police official urged the public to contact the unit at 562334578, 24 hours a day, to report any case of domestic violence.

"Our experience is new, and there could be failures and there could be success," Maj. Sarhan said. "But we will try to benefit from our experiences and those of others," he concluded.

Rotary Club donates wheelchairs to help disabled

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Amman Philadelphia Rotary Club donated 14 wheelchairs to the Families and Friends Society of Persons with Disabilities in a special ceremony held yesterday.

Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamsar, who attended the ceremony, called for more understanding of the needs of the disabled.

"There are around 130,000 individuals with special needs in the Kingdom," he said. "But only 20,000 are cared for."

Dr. Mamsar expressed his gratitude to the Amman Philadelphia Rotary Club and said he hoped more organisations and individuals would follow its example.

"The number of individuals with special needs is growing fast and the problem requires help from every one of us," he said.

President of the Amman Philadelphia Rotary Club, Charlie Saikaly, said the club has five projects for helping the disabled for this year and hopes for more.

Rima Zraigat, the president of the society and the mother of a 20-year-old daughter with cerebral palsy, said that the society helps around 60 individuals with special needs.

"The society has several programmes for disabled individuals," she told the Jordan Times. "We could help more if we had the means to do so."

Mrs. Zraigat said the objectives of the society range from introducing the disabled to their rights as citizens to awareness programmes for families of disabled persons.

Through support and understanding, a disabled individual has the chance to live a normal life.

"These chairs will make life easier for some who are going to the university to study," she said.

Tourism ministry announces plan to participate in Berlin exhibition

AMMAN (J.T.) — A total of 1.2 million tourists visited Jordan in 1997, bringing in revenues estimated at \$700 million for the country, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities on Wednesday.

The figures were released to coincide with the announcement of the Kingdom's participation in an international tourism market exhibition due to open in Berlin on March 7.

According to the figures, the total number included 239,000 European visitors, 45,000 of which came from Germany.

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji is to head the delegation to the Berlin event, where a Jordanian wing will be installed, the statement added. Jordan's participation was organised by the ministry in conjunction with Royal Jordanian, private sector travel and tourism offices, tourism transport companies, and a number of hotels.

According to Mr. Biltaji, one goal of the country's participation in the exhibition is maintaining a constant presence at international tourism events in order to guarantee the flow of European tourists to the Kingdom and promote foreign investment in the tourism sector.

According to the minister, Jordan has been participating in this annual event, considered the most important of its kind in the world, since 1966.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, Mr. Biltaji will address

a conference on the Jordanian government's incentives to investors in the tourism sector.

Mr. Biltaji last December blamed last year's 5.5 per cent drop in the number of tourists from 1996 on the current political situation in the Middle East resulting from the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a lecture at Al al Bayt University in Mafrqa, he said that despite the decline, the ministry will not be discouraged from exerting efforts to improve tourist facilities.

At least four major five-star, world-class hotels are currently under construction in Amman at a total cost of JD100 million and others are being built at the Dead Sea and Aqaba.

Weekly newspaper editor detained

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The editor of the satirical weekly "Abed Rabbah" (Slave of His God) was arrested early Tuesday morning by security forces, his family said Wednesday.

Abdul Hadi Raji Majali was arrested from his home at around 1:00 a.m., his father said.

"My son called me today and informed me that he would be released today [Wednesday], but so far he has not returned home," Mr. Majali told the Jordan Times.

Government officials were unavailable Wednesday evening to comment on the reasons of the arrest, but Mr. Majali said his son informed

him that he was arrested "because of a satirical photo of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali" that "Abed Rabbah" ran on its front page.

The photo shows the prime minister holding a microscope and looking under the belt of a person while calling out to Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid: "Come on Nahir, I found an infiltrator and a Kalashnikov."

The newspaper's 47th issue was openly criticising the latest government measures during the Ma'an riots in February, during which one person was killed and over 20 others were injured following clashes with security forces.

The issue was almost entirely devoted to mocking the government over its insistence last month that it was barring pro-Iraq rallies because it has solid information that "infiltrators" might use the demonstrations for sabotage.

In May 1997, the government amended the Press and Publications Law, forcing dozens of weekly newspapers to close, an event critics described as suffocating the freedom of the press. The government then defended its move by describing the amendments as lifting the ceiling of press freedoms.

Almost eight months later, the High Court annulled the temporary Press And Publications Law, passed in May 1997 while Parliament was in recess, and considered it as unconstitutional.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Energy minister, Arab Fund chairman discuss development issues

major electricity projects.

Yemeni health minister arrives Friday

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Hourani and the chairman of the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Abdul Latif Al Hamad, discussed issues related to developing the energy sector in Jordan and linking the national electric grids between Jordan, Egypt and Syria. The Fund thus far has granted the electric sector JD367 million in loans to finance

AMMAN (Petra) — Yemeni Health Minister Abdullah Abdul Wali Nashar will arrive here Friday on a three-day visit for talks with his Jordanian counterpart Ashraf Kurdi and senior officials on health-related issues, including treatment of Yemeni patients at Jordanian hospitals and the exchange of expertise in the medical field.

what's going on

THEMES

* "Placed" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

* "Drawing and Painting from Giotto to Leonardo and Michelangelo (the Dawn of the Renaissance) 1300-1500" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 5:30 p.m. (presented and commented on by Dr. Mazen Asfour)

CONCERTS

* Concert by Marcelle Khalaf and Shirbil Rouhana at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

* Musical performance on oud by Ghassan Abbasi at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* "Spanish Contemporary Graphic Art" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman (Tel. 610858), until March 20.

* "A Vision of Identity" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until March 20. (Tel. 644258). Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

Media continues to give Jordanian women a 'bum rap'

This is the third in a series of five articles that the Jordan Times will publish leading up to International Women's Day, observed on March 8.

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — If viewers believe everything they see on television, they might have the notion that women clean the floors in high heels and full make up, or that women like to sing and dance while cooking. In fact, television advertisements make house chores look like the most fun a woman could hope to have in the course of a day.

If readers of newspapers regard a woman's role in cartoons, they might be led to understand that most women are bimbos. In drama series, women are rarely the hero of the day. More often they are cast as the good woman standing by, or — to corrupt a phrase from a famous American country song — behind her man.

But house chores aren't fun (otherwise commercial advertisements for household cleaning items would be staring men). And in this century,

most people recognise that women aren't bimbos and are often heroes themselves.

So why do women still get such a bum rap in the media?

"In our culture, the role of women is still based on conservative views and theories of women, which consider her in relation to her 'biological function' — child bearing," said Zaghoulia Salem Sager, who recently completed a thesis on the role of women in Arab drama. "There is still a strictly physical conception of women that disregards her mentality, her spirit, her capabilities and her needs."

Women in Arab drama are portrayed terribly, said Ms. Sager, who also extended her criticism to commercials, which she said are "far worse."

"Women always play the supporting role to the hero, or she must be a widow or a sacrificing wife if she wants to play the lead," she said. "This is done to make a hero of women who 'give it all up' for their children and husband and who ignore their own needs."

"They make her out to be some-

thing really great for sacrificing everything, but it usually isn't the woman who chooses the path for herself — it was a path chosen for her by social customs and values."

Ms. Sager's study of 33 Arab dramas (10 from Jordan, eight from Syria and 15 from Egypt) showed that women were usually cast as a wife or other female relative, as a divorcee or a widow. Their activities of the 187 characters she studied were divided as follows: virtually none participated in pursuit of education or in the arts; six per cent of them were shown performing religious duties; slightly more than three per cent were portrayed doing voluntary work; two per cent were portrayed as members of social organisations; and 88 per cent were portrayed as having no activities outside the home.

"Women have absolutely no political presence," she said, "and she is always shown being incapable of managing business or financial affairs. If she interferes in her husband's business, disaster strikes. Women are never economically independent, although they may work in gender-typical jobs."

Divorce, she discovered, was used as a tool in drama to "put the woman in her place." The first cause of divorce in all dramas was that the woman wanted to work, and a typical divorced woman was usually a university graduate and self-reliant.

"What we are telling men and women through this," she said, "is 'stay home, don't work, you'll be a better woman'. The meaning of marriage is economic dependence for women and sexual satisfaction for men."

"I used to watch these dramas and really enjoy them," she said. "I never noticed how women were portrayed. Now, I watch with a very critical eye and don't enjoy them like before."

But the treatment of women in dramas, she said, pales before the way they are portrayed in commercials.

"In dramas, we see women portrayed as sex objects, which is related to their biological [child bearing] functions," she explained. "In commercials, the concentration is on her body, her physical attraction."

Said another writer who covers women's issues and has lectured abroad on Jordanian women's issues:

"It's not the fact that beautiful women are used in commercials. It's the way they are used. They are portrayed as stupid, or silly, no matter what they are doing — cooking, cleaning, looking after children."

"It's amazing how an ad about a cleaning product or a candy bar can be turned into a ridiculous scenario of a woman dancing and singing and making sensual gestures with her face."

Is the portrayal of women in the media here worse than in the West? And does it have an effect on the way people regard women in society?

"We can't say that it's better or worse than the West," said Ms. Sager. "It has to do with how the media is regarded. With dramas for example, I think people here take it very seriously, as an accurate description or portrayal of daily life. In Europe and the U.S., people tend to make a distinction — they see the drama as a kind of fantasy world that doesn't really exist."

"However, we can't say that it has no effect on this or that," she said. "We people consistently reduce it."

Thousands of Indonesian students demand Suharto resignation

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of Indonesian students shouting "reject Suharto" rallied at two campuses Wednesday to demand the resignation of their country's veteran ruler, witnesses said.

More than 3,000 students at Gadjah Mada University in the central Java city of Yogyakarta marched in the campus grounds throughout the morning, waving banners making the same demand before assembling to hear speeches by their leaders.

Some of the banners depicted the ruling Golkar Party's logo of a tree on a yellow background above a caption comparing the party to a spectre haunting the nation, the witnesses said.

The protesters also demanded political reforms and limits on presidential powers. Five East

Timorese students clamored onto a balcony above the crowd to shout demands for political equality and justice for their conflict-torn territory. Police were deployed at the campus but did not intervene and the students later dispersed peacefully, the witnesses added.

Dozens of demonstrations have been held at university campuses across the country in recent days as an electoral committee meets in Jakarta to return Gen. Suharto to office for a seventh consecutive five-year term, despite the growing calls for him to step aside.

Authorities have banned public gatherings during the meeting, but have been tolerant of student protests as long as they remain on university grounds. In Surabaya, the capital of East Java province, about 200 students rallied at the

Surabaya Islamic Institute to demand Gen. Suharto's resignation.

"They were all students of the university but most of them belonged to the PMII (the Indonesian Islamic Movement)," a resident who witnessed the rally said.

During the 90-minute rally, the students also demanded the electoral assembly reject a speech delivered by Gen. Suharto to its opening session Sunday in which he was supposed to account for his last five years in power.

They also called for urgent decentralisation of power and for the government to act against corruption.

There was a heavy security presence at the campus but the students dispersed peacefully, the resident said.

Some 5,000 students at the Teachers' University in the South Sulawesi province capital of Ujungpandang Wednesday marched between their two campuses under tight security, the Suara Pembaruan evening daily added.

More than 1,000 other students of the Muslim University of Indonesia, also in Ujungpandang, marched to the provincial parliament building to express their concern over the economic crisis faced by the nation, the daily added.

The students made no calls for Gen. Suharto's removal, although those from the Teachers' University called on the electoral committee to "select a leader who is really honest, just and authoritative."

Both marches proceeded peacefully, the daily said.



Picture dated August 1997 of ousted Cambodian First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh as he wipes his forehead during a press conference at a Manila hotel. A Phnom Penh military court found deposed Prince Ranariddh guilty of smuggling weapons and in his absence sentenced him to five years in prison (AFP photo)

Deposed Cambodian co-premier found guilty of arms smuggling

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — A Phnom Penh military court Wednesday found deposed Cambodian co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh guilty of smuggling weapons and in his absence sentenced him to five years in prison.

"The prince was the leader of this (smuggling) operation, using his personal rights as prime minister to buy the weapons and trying to deceive the authorities by labelling them falsely," presiding Judge Ney Thol said, summing up his verdict after the two-and-a-half hour trial.

"If the government could not have stopped this it would have brought more danger to the country."

The hearing was part of a complex four-point Japanese-brokered plan aimed at paving the way towards free and fair elections in Cambodia, scheduled for July 26.

Under the plan the exiled prince is due to receive a royal pardon from his father, King Norodom Sihanouk allowing him to return home to take part in the elections.

Neither the prince, who refused to offer a defense claiming the charges are illegal and who has rejected the legitimacy of the court, nor his two co-defendants were represented at the trial.

Prince Ranariddh's top military commander, Nhiek Bun Chhay, was also given a four-year prison term and his chief bodyguard, Thach Soeung was given a two-year suspended sentence.

They all have two months to appeal the verdict otherwise it will stand, according to prosecutor Sao Sok.

A close aide of Prince Ranariddh said the prince was not surprised by the verdict, but hoped his rival powerful co-premier Hun Sen would honour the amnesty plan.

"I think he is not surprised. He knew in advance that the court was controlled by Hun Sen, so there was no way he was going to be acquitted," said Kong Vibol, a close aide and member of the prince's cabinet speaking in Bangkok.

"If he was not found guilty, then the coup last year would be shown to have been wrong," the aide said.

But he stressed the prince, ousted by co-premier Hun Sen after fierce street fighting in the Cambodian capital in July last year, would not ask for a royal pardon.

Uncertainty reigns over the issue of the pardon as the king has said he would not grant one unless the prince requests it.

"The best we can say right now is that one step in the legal process is complete," said one Western diplomat.

"After the next trial, the whole legal process will be complete but the pardon process will still be out there."

A crowd of more than 400 people, including military and police officials, journalists and human rights advocates, crammed into the makeshift courtroom at the defence ministry for the verdict.

Ten witnesses, nine of whom were present in person, described the events of May 26 when several crates addressed to the prince were seized from a Danisb-registered freighter at the southern port of Sihanoukville.

The crates contained two tonnes of weapons and ammunition from a Polish arms dealer, identified in customs documents as "spare parts."

The prince, who was effectively ousted by Hun Sen last July, has admitted to having ordered the weapons but said they were intended for his personal bodyguard unit and were thus legal.

Hun Sen rejected the explanation saying weapons for bodyguards must be ordered through the defence ministry and the seizure heightened already strong tensions between him and the prince.

Just over a month after the seizure, the tension exploded into open warfare on the streets of the capital, ending the uneasy four-year-old Ranariddh-Hun Sen coalition.

The prince faces a second charge of colluding with the outlawed Khmer Rouge guerrilla faction on March 17.

Under the Japanese plan a ceasefire declared between the prince's forces and Phnom Penh's troops must also hold and government conditions that the resistance sever relations with the Khmer Rouge and reintegrate themselves into the army must be met.

Khmer Rouge military chief Ta Mok and Khmer Rouge political leader Khieu Samphan said from their northern jungle base in Anlong Veng the Japanese plan was not a solution.

"The only way out is the formation of a national government with the participation of all the Cambodian forces (which would be charged with organising the elections)," Khieu Samphan said.

The international community is pushing for the prince, whose royalist FUNCINPEC party narrowly won 1993's historic U.N.-brokered election, to be allowed to return for the election.

Meanwhile, in a possibly related case, a senior military commander loyal to the prince Brigadier General Kim Sang was murdered as the trial got underway, according to police and human rights workers.

Amnesty says human rights eroded in Australia

SYDNEY (R) — Amnesty International criticised Australia Wednesday for undermining human rights, citing its detention of Asian asylum seekers, its treatment of Aborigines and its failure to fully implement human rights treaties.

Australia's national and state governments had eroded the status of human rights through their actions and statements, damaging Australia's international reputation, Amnesty said in its first report on the country in two years.

"Amnesty International believes there has been a change in attitude which has led to a significant downgrade of human rights on the government's priority list," said Heinz Schumann-Zeggel, amnesty's researcher on Australia.

"Australia no longer plays the active, agenda-driving role that the international human rights community has always been used to," he told a news conference.

Amnesty said the automatic, indefinite detention of unauthorised asylum seekers while their applications for refugee status are processed was a breach of human rights.

"Unauthorised asylum seekers in Australia who have committed no crime are treated as second-class prisoners. They have (fewer) rights than convicted murderers in this country," Schumann-Zeggel said.

"How fair is a law which automatically prescribes open-ended detention of babies and grandmothers and people in wheelchairs without giving any reason?"

Amnesty said there were 350 asylum seekers, mostly Asian boatpeople, in detention last year. More than 30 had been detained for more than a year and some for more than two years.

The United Nations human rights committee said last year the detention of a Cambodian man for more than four years was an unacceptable breach of human rights.

Amnesty was also critical of Australia's treatment of Aborigines, noting continued Aboriginal deaths in custody and the "stolen generation" of Aboriginal children who were forcibly

removed from their parents as part of an assimilation policy.

It described as inadequate Australia's response to a 1997 human rights report on the stolen generation that said the past removal of tens of thousands of Aborigines was "systematic racial discrimination and genocide."

"The government's handling of the report is indicative of an overall disinterest in human rights over the past year," said Schumann-Zeggel.

Prime Minister John Howard, while expressing his personal sorrow for the "stolen generation" of Aborigines, has rejected the charge of genocide and refused to issue a government apology as recommended by the report and demanded by Aborigines.

"The government's silence on these issues in its formal response gives rise to concern about its willingness to address thoroughly serious violations of human rights," amnesty said.

The forced removal of indigenous children two decades ago was still relevant to Aborigines who suffer high rates of imprisonment and deaths in custody, amnesty noted.

"In International's experience, the effects of institutionalisation and family disruption through child removal are now being felt in the youngest generation," the report said.

A 1997 Australian Institute of Criminology report found nearly half of Aborigines aged 18 to 24 had been arrested at least once. There are an estimated 300,000 Aborigines in Australia's 18 million population.

Amnesty also criticised Australia for its failure to fully implement international human rights treaties. Australia will this year seek to pass the administrative decisions bill, which will prevent government decisions being challenged on the basis of human rights treaties.

"It sends the wrong signal to the international community, in particular in the Asia-Pacific region, about the government's seriousness to deal with difficult human rights questions," said Schumann-Zeggel.

NATO expansion sails through U.S. Senate panel

WASHINGTON (R) — A key Senate panel Tuesday took the first step towards expansion of the NATO alliance with a vote to bring as new members former Warsaw Pact countries Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms called the overwhelming support shown for adding the three, "an obvious vote of confidence in the democracies of Eastern Europe."

The panel approved the resolution of enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on a vote of 16-2 and sent it to the full senate for expected approval later this month.

President Bill Clinton also welcomed the vote and said adding new members would strengthen the alliance.

"By adding these countries as our newest allies, we will make NATO stronger. Europe more stable and America more secure," he said in a statement.

Mr. Clinton said the United States had led the way in building a peaceful Europe and he hoped Congress would ratify NATO's enlargement soon.

The senior Democrat on the panel, Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware, noted that support for enlargement was bipartisan and reflected the changes in post-cold war Europe. "In light of the dynamic change in Europe it is essential for NATO to adjust or risk losing its viability and purpose," he said.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, who controls the chamber's schedule, said he would not permit opponents of NATO expansion to delay the final vote until June as requested. The NATO resolution is ultimately expected to clear the full Senate by more than the required two-thirds, or 67 votes.

The three states were approved for entry into the 16-member Western alliance last December, but they cannot be admitted until the parliaments of all current NATO members have ratified the move. Canada and Denmark have

already done so.

Despite the easy vote and the optimistic prospects for U.S. ratification, concerns expressed in the Foreign Relations Committee indicated future candidates for the alliance could run into roadblocks in Congress.

The unlikely duo of conservative Republican John Ashcroft of Missouri and liberal Democrat Paul Wellstone of Minnesota cast the only negative vote.

Mr. Wellstone said he had an intuitive sense that the enlargement into Eastern Europe would prove destabilising and would jeopardise relations with Russia, particularly after President Boris Yeltsin leaves office. He called his objections "almost a prickling in my fingertips."

Massachusetts Democrat John Kerry said he would vote for this first round of expansion but counselled restraint on future NATO growth. "We need to do a significant amount of slow thinking on this. I am particularly concerned about the management of the relationship with Russia," he said.

France and Italy pressed unsuccessfully last year to add Romania and Slovenia in the first round of NATO enlargement.

Russia, alone in the former Eastern bloc to not seek

inclusion in NATO, is likely to resist membership for the once Soviet-ruled Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. But in London Tuesday, Estonian President Lennart Meri predicted the Baltic states would be "seriously on the table" at the Atlantic alliance summit in Washington next year.

The uncertainty of the cost to the United States and the debate over military burden sharing are expected to draw the most attention during the debate. Estimates have ranged from \$1.5 billion to \$125 billion over 10 years.

Several prominent Americans have joined an unusual coalition of groups on the political left and right that opposes the expansion, arguing the cost would be too great.

In speeches on the Senate floor, lawmakers have questioned whether the U.S. public would support the use of troops, and the expense, to defend nations in Eastern and Central Europe.

Clinton administration officials noted that this round of enlargement would add 200,000 troops to NATO, which they argued would make Europe more stable and erase the artificial lines between East and West drawn after World War II.

Cook in Sarajevo for Bosnia talks

SARAJEVO (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook arrived here Wednesday for talks with Bosnian leaders on how to speed up implementation of the Dayton peace agreement.

Mr. Cook, representing the presidency of the European Union, will travel to Serb-held Banja Luka, northwest Bosnia in the afternoon where he is to address the Bosnian Serb assembly after a meeting with Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic and Prime Minister Milorad Dodik.

In the capital Sarajevo he is to hold discussions with key government and opposition politicians including the members of Bosnia's three-man presidency — Serb Momcilo Krajisnik, President Alija Izetbegovic, a Muslim, and Croat Kresimir Zuhak.

Mr. Cook is expected to broach the issues of refugee return, the media, human rights and the need to build a modern Bosnian state.

Mr. Cook, who made no statement on arriving in the Bosnian capital, was welcomed by Bosnian Foreign Minister Jadranko Prlic and British Ambassador Charles Crawford.

The foreign secretary travels on to Belgrade late Wednesday for talks with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic on the crisis in Serbia's Albano-populated Kosovo province.

Tuesday ethnic Albanians buried their dead following armed clashes with Serbian police at the weekend, as international pressure mounted on Belgrade to avoid further bloodshed and accommodate demands for a restoration of Kosovo's autonomy.

Russia warns NATO over nuclear deployments in Eastern Europe

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia will present an "adequate response" if weapons of massive destruction are stationed in new NATO member states in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia's new security supremo said Wednesday.

Security Council Secretary Andrei Kokoshin told Moscow Echo radio that Russia's strategic nuclear weapons are still capable of acting as a deterrent to any moves by NATO to deploy nuclear forces in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

"We view NATO's expansion eastward, and in particular the deployment of weapons of mass destruction there, very negatively," said Mr. Kokoshin, who was appointed to take over as security chief Tuesday. He added that Moscow would be able to "find an adequate response" to such a development.

The Atlantic alliance, which invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to become members last July, has stressed that it has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons and ground forces in the former Soviet bloc countries.

Better wombs may improve intelligence — U.K. magazine

LONDON (R) — Genes may not be the only factor in determining intelligence — better wombs can produce smarter children, New Scientist magazine said Wednesday.

Victor Denenberg and colleagues at the University of Connecticut in Storrs and the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine, found that genetically identical mouse embryos implanted in different wombs performed mental tasks at different levels.

"Denenberg thinks that the difference could be due to some

subtle biochemical factors in the uterus," the magazine said.

The scientists say the research is the first to clearly implicate the womb in a child's long-term cognitive abilities and could have important implications for maternal health, surrogate motherhood and the development of artificial wombs.

"Maybe we ought to think more seriously about the physiology of gestation," Mr. Denenberg told the magazine. "Are there ways to prepare a non-pregnant uterus for pregnancy?"

Research on identical twins separated at birth and raised apart had previously led scientists to suspect that development in the womb affected intelligence, but Mr. Denenberg's study on mice offers further evidence of a link.

The researchers used a genetically identical group of mouse embryos suffering from an auto-immune disease similar to lupus in humans. They transplanted one third of the embryos in mice without the disease and another third in the wombs of other auto-immune

mice. The mice were raised by mothers not affected by the disease and, after they were weaned, Mr. Denenberg and his team put them through a battery of five learning tests.

"All the mice showed competence in learning, but in four of the five tests, the mice that developed in the womb of a mouse with no auto-immune disease did better — even if they had inherited the brain abnormalities associated with the auto-immune disease," the magazine said.

Friends pay with their lives for N. Ireland peace process

BELFAST (AFP) — Two lifelong friends — a Catholic and a Protestant — shot dead in a bar have paid with their lives for the Northern Ireland peace process which extremists from both sides of the political divide are determined to sabotage.

Ministers in Belfast, Dublin and London and political chiefs are all deeply worried that this latest attack could signal the start of a new sectarian shooting spree and put further strain on IRA and loyalist ceasefires.

With the political parties back at Stormont Castle Wednesday for a new round of negotiations on the province's future, all sides appealed for calm.

Catholic Damien Traynor and Protestant Philip Allen, were shot dead by masked men in a Catholic-owned pub at Poyntzpass, near Newry, southwest of Belfast late Tuesday.

One of the gunmen shouted: "Get down you bastards." The gunmen then shot the victims as they lay on the floor and sprayed the bar with bullets before fleeing, said police.

Two other people were injured by the gunmen, who police believe were Protestant paramilitaries bent on keeping British rule in the divided province and preventing any kind of settlement being reached in the Northern Ireland peace negotiations.

Three men were being questioned about the murders, police said Wednesday.

No organisation has admitted responsibility for the shootings in a village, regarded as a model for Northern Ireland where Protestants and Catholics lived together in harmony.

But the renegade Loyalist Volunteer Force is being blamed by security chiefs.

The attack followed car bombings last month in Moira, County Down, in which 11 people were injured, and Portadown, County Armagh, two predominantly Protestant towns, and for which the Republican splinter group Continuity IRA has been blamed.

In two months, inter-communal violence has already claimed 13 lives and dozens

of injuries.

David Trimble, head of the province's largest Protestant party the Ulster Unionists, and Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, both condemned the killings.

Church of Ireland primate Archbishop Robin Eames said both communities in the province were under attack at a crucial stage of the peace process. He told BBC Radio: "We are told we are on the threshold of a possible breakthrough."

The gunmen "must not be allowed to succeed."

London is already pushing negotiators for an agreement to put to the people of the north and Ireland by May 7 giving them little room for manoeuvre. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern has already questioned whether this timetable can be met.

But Deputy Irish Prime Minister Mary Harney said the murders would strengthen Dublin's determination to find a lasting political settlement.

Seamus Mallon, the local MP, who represents the moderate Social Democratic and Nationalist Party, and is a close friend of bar owner, Dessie Canavan, said: "It's not just an attack on a well respected local bar. It is an attack on the entire peace process."

Mr. Adams, whose Sinn Féin has been ousted from the current peace talks until March 9 because of suspected IRA links to two previous Belfast murders, said the perpetrators were attempting to minimise the potential for change by terrorising people into accepting less than what is required to build a permanent peace.

Mr. Adams expressed fears about what might happen in coming months. "We have got to realise there are murderous groups on both sides intent on destroying the process."

Ulster Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan condemned the killings as "cowardly" and "utterly despicable." The people who carried out the murders "are quite frankly not fit to walk the same earth as the people whose lives they have taken."



A Trinamul Congress party worker, his face painted in the colours of his party flag, walks with his colleagues to a victory rally in Calcutta (Reuters photo)

The party is over, India must learn coalition lessons

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India must learn to adapt to an era of coalition governments following 45 years of one-party rule, analysts and leaders said Wednesday.

Political analyst Pran Chopra, chief of the Centre for Policy Research, an independent research body, said the country's just-concluded national elections proved the once-dominant Congress party's political stranglehold was over.

"After four decades of single-party government, and that too by a party which was hegemonic, it is a difficult skill to acquire now," he said.

"But coalitions in India have become unavoidable."

India, wrecked by recent political instability, is electing its fifth government within two years. No single party has won a majority since 1984.

Three coalitions have collapsed since the previous national elections in 1996.

Mr. Chopra added: "The learning process has not been discouraging."

"We have had three coalitions and each coalition has met the conditions for success and each has been better than the previous one."

The Hindu nationalists and their allies topped the February-March elections but fell short of a majority. They and the Congress, which has ruled India alone for most of the 50 years since independence, were Wednesday canvassing support for rival coalition bids. Parliament reconvenes on March 15.

Congress official Anand Sharma, a former chief of the party's youth wing, conceded the 113-year-old organisation had to "learn to live and work with coalitions."

"There is still a feeling within the party that it is supreme. People will have to adjust to new realities."

The Congress, frustrated by its lack of influence, toppled two minority United Front coalitions within eight months last year. The second rift in November sparked the elections.

The BJP, for instance, wants to build a temple on the site of a historic mosque destroyed by Hindu fanatics in 1992 which led to 2,000 deaths in riots. Many of its allies fear the scheme would enrage Muslims.

Samata Party led by George Fernandes and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam based in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu are vehemently opposed to the BJP stand on the mosque issue and other matters concerning Muslims.

The BJP and its partners are accused by the Congress and the United Front of being sectarian and planning to turn India into a theocracy.

Mexican prison rebellion ends with two police dead

MEXICO CITY (R) — Two police officers were killed and seven other people were injured Tuesday in a prison riot in southern Mexico, which ended when the prison director resigned, officials said.

Roberto Martinez Ortiz, chief prosecutor of Oaxaca state, said the mutinous inmates of Santa Maria Ixcotel prison in a suburb of the state capital, 280 miles southeast of Mexico city, released 64 police held hostage for 10 hours.

The official said two police died during the riot, which began at daybreak and in which six officers and one prisoner were injured.

Mr. Martinez told reporters that inmates agreed to end the rebellion after the intervention of Oaxaca Archbishop

Bartolome Carrasco and the resignation of the prison Director Alfredo Martinez.

In an earlier statement, state authorities said officials were attacked when they tried to summon inmates to a roll call.

It said the prison's 1,200 inmates had threatened to blow up gas tanks and were demanding that their relatives be allowed to enter the jail with cigarettes and with their faces hidden.

Local radio reported that prisoners rebelled after guards tried to carry out a search for weapons.

An inmate who identified himself as Antonio Roque Cruz told a station the prisoners were protesting over the "violation of their individual rights."

"We expect dialogue, not violence," he said.

Nigerian pro-Abacha demos fall flat, opposition targetted

ABUJA (AFP) — Rallies staged to back Nigerian military ruler General Sani Abacha as a presidential candidate drew limited support early Wednesday, while police deployed once again to prevent a counter-rally.

In the federal capital, Abuja, the second day of the pro-Abacha "carnival," as some observers described it, brought out tens of thousands of people after around 10:00 a.m. (0900 GMT) but far short of the two million expected by organisers.

Police meanwhile took up stations in the economic metropolis, Lagos, to stop any pro-democracy demonstrations, after rounding up 10 opponents of the junta Tuesday, according to police sources cited by Wednesday's press.

Witnesses said that those detained Tuesday included Olisa Agbakoba, a lawyer

and former president of the Civil Liberties Organisation, a Lagos-based human rights organisation behind planned rights protests in the city.

Sources close to Mr. Agbakoba described his arrest as brutal, while the Vanguard and Tribune dailies said that police had fired warning shots Tuesday as well as tear gas to disperse fewer than 2,000 Lagos demonstrators.

The government denied being behind the rallies in Abuja to have Gen. Abacha hacked as a candidate in polls planned for August as part of his phased programme to hand over power to elected civilians next October.

However, observers and some newspapers said that Tuesday's events in the city in central Nigeria, which included shows by musi-

cians and a turnout by the national Super Eagles football team, ahead of the World Cup in Paris, were clearly stage-managed by the administration.

The privately owned AIT television station reported that only 50,000 people gathered in Abuja, where the organisers had been speaking of pulling in a throng of two million.

In Lagos, the head of the main opposition umbrella movement, Abraham Adesanya, told AFP that Tuesday's "police action shows that we have a fascist government."

"Pro-democracy groups will be meeting very soon and we will decide our next line of action," said Mr. Adesanya, leader of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO).

Wednesday, "All pro-democracy

groups will be involved in the next rally," he added, without elaborating.

The Champion daily reported that a pregnant woman and a policeman were killed Tuesday in a stampede provoked by a police charge, but this report could not be confirmed by any other source.

The armed police presence in Lagos Wednesday was down to several dozen men as opposed to about 150 backed by armoured personnel carriers Tuesday.

Gen. Abacha's regime has come under strong domestic and foreign pressure over its human rights record, including international sanctions and suspension from the Commonwealth.

Gen. Abacha, who seized power in November 1993, has yet to state categorically whether he will stand in the civilian elections.

French inquiry into role in Rwanda not enough, critics say

PARIS (AFP) — The aid organisation Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) has criticised as insufficient a decision by France's National Assembly to open an inquiry into Paris' role in Rwanda ahead of the 1994 genocide.

In a statement late Tuesday, MSF or Doctors without Borders, criticised a decision earlier the same day by the assembly's defence committee to set up a fact-finding inquiry, saying it would not have sufficient judicial power.

The office of Defence Committee Chairman Paul Quilès had said a panel of 10 members of parliament would take part in the inquiry on "military operations by France, other countries and the United Nations in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994."

However, Mr. Quilès' aides stressed that the investigation was not a fully-fledged parliamentary inquiry that could result in

legal proceedings, notably before the United Nations war crimes court for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania.

It is rather a "fact-finding mission," the statement said. "We insist on a committee of inquiry, the only body that has a precise judicial framework and has a real mandate to control governmental action," MSF's legal counsel, Francoise Saulnier, told AFP.

"In a serious matter such as this, if the rules of the game are not set out from the outset it is wrong to believe the work will be efficient," she added.

Between 500,000 and 800,000 people, mostly Tutsis, were killed by Rwandan government-backed militias in the Central African country in early 1994, but four years later France's role in events is still unclear, aid agencies said earlier this week.

Between 1990 and 1994,

France provided financial and military backing for Kigali under the terms of a mutual defence pact.

Since then, media reports, notably last month in the conservative French daily Le Figaro, have regularly alleged that France had backed the Hutu regime even after it launched the genocide at the end of April 1994.

The allegations that France continued to send aid to the regime have always been flatly denied by the French foreign ministry.

In a communiqué backed by other groups and intellectuals Monday, MSF noted that Belgium has recently held an inquiry into the genocide in its former colony but complained the subject was taboo in France.

One of the signatories, Claudine Vidal, head of research at the French think-tank CNRS, told AFP an inquiry was needed on

France's support for the regime and also on its June 1994 intervention in Rwanda, codenamed operation "Turquoise" which followed the killings.

Rwanda has said the operation was launched to rescue Hutu officials.

France has also been accused of flying out Hutu leaders and allowing the sending of weapons to the Hutu side.

The reason, according to media reports, for France's policy at the time was that the Hutu regime was French-speaking while the Tutsi-led force which ended the genocide was dominated by English-speakers.

The U.N. Security Council set up the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha in November 1994 to seek out and try those held mainly responsible for genocide and war crimes in the Central African country.

No verdicts have yet been reached.

U.S. research homes in on gene for Gehrig's disease

WASHINGTON (R) — Researchers said Tuesday they had tracked down a gene responsible for a form of the muscle-wasting disease Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The gene is somewhere on Chromosome 9, the scientists at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Pennsylvania said.

The next step is to map and identify the gene itself, they reported in the American Journal of Human Genetics.

"These results bring us a major step closer to isolating the gene itself," David Cornblath, a neurology professor at Johns Hopkins, said in a statement.

The researchers studied a Maryland family, the Mattinglys, who have suffered ALS through several generations.

"When we do that and clone it, we can find what it does. That should help us treat not only the disease that affects the Mattinglys, but also similar neurodegenerative disorders that affect a broader range of patients," Dr. Cornblath said.

ALS includes a range of diseases that kill the motor nerve cells that control muscles. The muscles waste away and become paralysed.

Baseball player Lou Gehrig died of ALS and physicist Stephen Hawking suffers from a form known in his native Britain as motor neuron disease.

About 30,000 Americans suffer from ALS, which usually kills within five years as the muscles that control breathing waste away and paralysis sets in.

The version that affects the Mattinglys usually starts to show up in childhood and is never fatal, although victims are badly disabled.

Two genes already identified on Chromosome 9 are potential suspects, Phillip Chance, formerly of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and now at the University of Washington at Seattle, said.

They include genes that create a calcium channel on the surface of nerve cells and are involved in programmed cell death, known as apoptosis.

"However, these are only two genes from a large segment of Chromosome 9," Dr. Chance said.

"Geneticists haven't fully characterised this region, so there are a number of other genes we will have to study."

Other research has also linked ALS with this programmed cell death. This process usually has a house-keeping function, making sure the body gets rid of old or damaged cells.

Scientists in the United States and Switzerland found last July that mice with symptoms of the disease could live longer if they were made to produce large amounts of a protein, BCL-2, involved in apoptosis.

British trucker rams Buckingham Palace gates

LONDON (R) — A British truck-driver has been arrested after crashing through the gates of Buckingham Palace, apparently on a "bizarre mission" to see Queen Elizabeth.

Police said the driver, who rammed his truck through the palace gates Tuesday morning, was released on bail pending further inquiries.

"A 35-year-old lorry driver from the West Midlands (in central England) was arrested after attempting to gain unlawful entry to Buckingham Palace," said a police spokesman.

Before charging the gates, the truck had been in a number of collisions in central London.

The Sun newspaper, whose photographer witnessed the event, said the driver was on "a bizarre mission" to see the queen and had left a trail of destruction in his wake. It quoted a police source as saying the driver "just flipped. He decided to go to Buckingham Palace to tell the queen something."

Police had no estimate of the damage caused to palace property.

Security has been tightened at the palace to deter intruders since unemployed labourer Michael Fagan broke into the central London building in 1982 and found his way into the queen's bedroom while she was sleeping there.

Pakistani love match man wounded in armed attack

KARACHI (AFP) — Unidentified gunmen opened fire outside a civil court here Wednesday, seriously wounding a Pakistani young man whose secret marriage to a Pushtun girl triggered violence last month, police said.

Kanwar Ahsan, 30, received multiple bullet wounds and was rushed to a local hospital where he was fighting for his life, police and doctors said.

Mr. Ahsan, a member of the Urdu-speaking Mohajir community, was arrested last month after the family of the Pushtun girl, Riffat Afridi, claimed she was kidnapped.

He was brought to the court amid tight security after his remand expired.

Police said assailants armed with pistols and revolvers were already in the court and opened fire as Mr. Ahsan was climbing the stairs to appear before the civil judge.

Mr. Ahsan, who was handcuffed, received three bullets — in his chest, thigh and groin area, doctors said, adding, "we are struggling to save his life."

Some 200 people from rival families were in the court premises.

Witnesses said the firing "spread panic" and people started rushing for shelter. An unidentified young girl was also injured, they said.

Police, suspecting the family members for the assault, have arrested several people including Riffat's cousin Nizabat Khan who claims he had already married her.

Her father, Abdul Jabbar Afridi, and brother, Abbas



File picture dated Feb. 19 shows a handcuffed Kanwar Ahsan entering the investigation centre of Crime Investigation Agency after appearing in a court (AFP photo)

Afridi, have also been detained for interrogation, police said.

Tariq Khan, an elder of Afridi tribe, denied any involvement by the girl's family saying "we respect the judicial process."

However, he said the attackers could be some other ethnic Pashtuns "provoked" by the love marriage.

The Pashtun community, demanding the girl's return paralysed Karachi during a protest strike on Feb. 11 when violence left two people dead.

The girl in a statement before a magistrate last week denied that she was abducted by Mr. Ahsan.

A local magistrate quoted her as telling him that she was in love and married Mr. Ahsan on her own free will.

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Demographic realities

THE RECENT census conducted by the Palestinian National Authority confirms what we have all suspected, that the Palestinian population is swelling by leaps and bounds. According to the census, there are about three million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel only disputes the number of Palestinians in Arah east Jerusalem, putting it at about 170,000 while the census figures estimate it to be well over 200,000. Such demographic realities, which cannot be wished away by the Israelis or anybody else, reaffirm the indisputable fact that a Palestinian nation is de facto in existence. If Israel continues to ignore the facts on the ground, it is going to end up with a bi-national state at best or a Bosnia-like situation at worst.

Unless a Palestinian state is quickly allowed to take root, there can be no escape from the inevitable consequence of Israel resorting to ethnic cleansing or the emergence of an Arab-Jewish state. This is a choice that both parties will have to reckon with sooner than later. More important than the current agenda of ongoing talks between the two parties is the urgent need to articulate a grand vision on how best the two sides can live together in the future, side-by-side, in a peaceful manner.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his inner circle of supporters do not strike us as cognizant of the demographic dimension in an enlightened way. Israeli hardliners are perhaps entertaining all sorts of scenarios to get rid of the increasing number of Palestinians through transfer or otherwise. We have, in fact, seen how the Israeli mayor of Jerusalem has concocted plans to cancel residency permits of Arah living in Arab Jerusalem in a desperate bid to Judaize the entire city.

At one time, the ruling Likud Party advocated the establishment of an alternative homeland for the Palestinians in Jordan. In the wake of the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, however, we presumed that such a wild and irresponsible idea was buried for good. But recent leaks from Israel indicate that the idea of an alternative homeland for the Palestinians is still alive and kicking. Jordan, which will be the first country to be affected by the lack of a genuine and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem, cannot possibly sit idle while such plans are being put into action.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek criticised what he described as the government's tendency to borrow money from the World Bank, saying continued borrowing will overburden the country with debts, adversely affect the national economy and even endanger Jordan's independence. Dr. Fanek focused in particular on the \$630 million in loans and donations which were announced earlier this week by Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin. He said most of these funds will come as loans rather than grants, and the World Bank charges one to three per cent higher interest rates than other banks. The writer said the World Bank's loans cannot be rescheduled like those from other financial organisations, and payment should be made without delay otherwise grave consequences await this country. He added that loans given by the World Bank to Jordan are not soft, as Dr. Haddadin has described them, except only in the sense that payments are spread over a longer period of time. Recalling that Jordan has not yet overcome problems connected with previous debts for which the country sought help from the International Monetary Fund, the writer said more loans will negatively affect the national economy. He said the World Bank has real interest in offering loans to various countries because it is aiming to make profits at the expense of Jordan's bankruptcy.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Nicola Nasser described Netanyahu's offer to pull out Israeli forces from southern Lebanon under specific conditions as a political manoeuvre to help him escape from the implementation of U.N. resolutions. The writer said Netanyahu is saying that the pull-out can take place only after Lebanon takes specific security arrangements in the south — a move which would contradict Resolution 425 as it does not stipulate any conditions for the withdrawal. According to the writer Netanyahu made the proposal because of internal pressure to pull out following the loss of many Israeli troops in southern Lebanon at the hands of the resistance forces and in order to ease European diplomatic pressure on Israel which demands that it pull out from the occupied Arah lands. He said Netanyahu made the proposal also in a bid to separate the Syrian and the Lebanese tracks and isolate Syria, to try to escape from implementing the peace accords with the Palestinians and to achieve a separate peace treaty with Lebanon under Israel's own terms, disregarding Resolution 425. Such behaviour, he said, is bound to meet with total failure.

View from Academia

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

Hegemony of the fourth type

ARE THE press and the media good or bad? Are they a blessing or a curse? What tasks are they supposed to perform? What functions and what purposes are they expected to serve? And how?

Answering questions such as these appears to be a must at this point in time, for everyone on this small globe of ours. When you watch a movie in which you see a group of photographers, camera-persons, and reporters aggressively approaching or dauntlessly chasing (and then literally hounding and haunting) individuals of sorts for the sake of the "truth" of a matter or for the sake of a "story" to be written, you cannot but ask such questions. But when fiction becomes tragic reality — such as in the case of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed, where the reporters and the journalists were the first suspects — the answers become more urgent. In the case of President Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, the press and the media (in the opinion of many experts) did more harm than good — dramatising, inflating, blowing the matter out of perspective, victimising, and damning.

Also (more generally), how reliable are the press and the media as a source of information and as an educational tool? On the one hand, we feel they have brought the diverse countries and cultures of today's world much closer than they have been for ages. On the other hand, they have (at times, often, most often, in some cases, in many cases, etc.) created, spread or fostered (intentionally as well as unintentionally) many misconceptions, untruths, falsehoods, and lies. The case of the "Arah" or "Muslim" as portrayed by Western press and media is an excellent example of the negative side-effects, dangers, vices, and disadvantages of the press and

media. Here is a stark example where communication becomes miscommunication, where a potentially useful tool backfires. What happens to good old impartiality and objectivity? Most press and media institutions the world over (not only those which are state-run and state-controlled, but also — ironically — those which are privately owned) have lost a lot of their impartiality and objectivity. Many have become propaganda tools, desperately trying to propagate either the ideas of their so-called stakeholders or those which emanate from their own unreliable perceptions and misperceptions.

For us in this part of the globe, where the press and the media are heaving (and speedily so) not only important but also influential, powerful and central in the lives of most of us, such questions appear to be not only important but crucial. In addition, since we (in this part of the globe, again, and at this particular moment in time) are not (generally speaking — no offence) initiators or inventors but enthusiastic recipients and consumers, we (it seems) have to raise questions about the advantages and disadvantages of anything and everything we receive, use or consume — including the press and the media.

I am not trying to suggest answers for the questions just raised; rather, I am calling upon those involved to try to find answers in light of the deterioration and the abuse which we see daily.

It is obvious that the function, role and approach of the press and the media worldwide needs to be looked into, thought about more carefully, revised, and even totally redrawn. They are supposed to be in the service of people and not scourges against them; means for their freedom and release, and not

means of imprisonment; vehicles of understanding, not tools for distortion.

In our own case, I would say that our experience with the press and the media, like our experience with almost everything else (since we are, again, recipients and consumers) is relatively novice and amateurish (with, of course, some notable exceptions here and there). All the more reason why we should be more careful about the type of press and media we want, the approach we wish to adopt, the goals we want to fulfil, and the benefit we hope to reap.

Do we want to follow in the steps of the Western media, or should we develop institutions, methods, and styles that serve our positive purposes better and harmonise with our culture more appropriately. Do we want a tool which works for us, or a monster which destroys us.

Some people in our world like to think of the press and the media as the "fourth authority." Should we not think about the repercussions and implications of empowering the press and the media, before such authority is abused. The matter needs serious thinking as we still think and talk about the Press and Publications Law and about freedom of expression. Over the years societies have become increasingly aware of the need to introduce laws that govern the work and authority of legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. The same, it seems to me, needs to be done with respect to the press and the media.

The press and media can be tools for hegemony, imprisonment and even death (rather than liberation and freedom), if we are not careful. Think of Diana and Dodi, and of Monica Lewinsky.



LETTERS

'Because they live in Jordan'

To the editor:

THOSE JORDANIANS in the town of Ma'an, who went on a rampage two weeks ago in support of Saddam Hussein, should count themselves lucky they do not live in Iraq where they would have suffered severe punishments for their actions. It is precisely because they are fortunate enough to live in the most open and benevolent state in the Middle East that they can protest the way they did and still go back home in one piece!

Ex-officials and opposition figures, precisely because they live in Jordan, can, with total impunity, voice their criticisms of the regime even to visiting foreign journalists, travel the length and width of the country rebel rousing and inciting 'mob' violence in the name of democracy. God help us all if, one day, our destiny lands in the hands of such "democrats" as those who embrace dictators elsewhere in the Arab World.

When His Majesty the King experimented with democracy and political pluralism as far back as 1958, he was rewarded with an attempt on his life. His recent measures of liberalising and gradually opening up the body politic are being eroded by the atavistic demands of a motley crew of yesterday's men, be they Islamists, nationalists, communists or those with a severe dose of Israel-phobia. Those world vision is fossilised in bygone times. The

King who is essentially a modernist and a liberal at heart finds himself torn between the devil and the deep blue sea.

The blame for the "marked deterioration in respect to basic freedoms" in our country as outlined to Human Rights Watch recently by a few self-serving and politically myopic academics cannot be laid at the door of King Hussein.

Arab intellectuals are vociferous when it comes to politics — the Grand Design, but are lame, totally ineffectual and almost always silent when it comes to matters of real substance that determine where we are and where we are going. I haven't heard any of them — except a few of your gallant correspondents — condemn the recent murders of hapless women in the name of honour. I haven't heard a single voice calling for a radical review of our archaic family law and gender relations. We are the only people on the face of this planet who are proud of their institutionalised sexual apartheid.

Before we talk about individual freedom, shouldn't all individuals in our society be free first? Perhaps we should look at history and wonder why we Arabs still have not had our Enlightenment, an important prerequisite and an essential precursor to genuine democracy.

Dr. Kamal Tawfiq Nisari
 London

'West must grasp the feudal nature of Middle East to deal with it effectively'

By Israel Shahak

WHY DO Europeans consistently fail to understand what is happening in the Middle East? The main reason is their assumption that the region behaves like the Europe of the twentieth century. But different parts of the globe live in different periods of time.

Barring certain aspects of technology, the Middle East today exists according to norms that are more like the Europe of the Middle Ages with its feudal social and political structures, and especially its integration of formal religion into every aspect of daily life. This feudal model governs the behaviour of society within individual Middle Eastern states and the relations between states of the region. It also holds true, more or less, for the way the region as a whole perceives its relationship with outside powers.

A characteristic of feudal societies is that political reality conflicts with appearance much more so than under modern systems. War and trade were carried on simultaneously in feudal Europe. In southern Lebanon war has been waged for years, but the same area also serves as one of the best outlets for Israel's flourishing exports to Arab countries.

With the sole condition that no 'Made in Israel' labels appear on Israeli goods, the trade includes exports (especially of eggs and work clothes) to Syria, which formally opposes all normalisation with Israel. It also includes exports to the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, who has been for many years a declared enemy of Israel. During Saddam Hussein's war with Iran, he bought Israeli timbers for his soldiers (especially prepared to suit the Iraqi taste), and even after the Gulf war Israel helped him with exports as much as it dared. Such exports are paid for in gold or hard currency and constitute an important source of Israeli income.

Such trade can only be conducted on the condition that the niceties are preserved on both sides. Arah regimes continue to oppose Zionism, and Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu continues to make speeches saying that all Arabs want to destroy Israel. But cooperation mixed with conflict, and even war, will go on so long as the basic feudal structure remains.

As well as governing relations between Israel and other Middle Eastern states, the same feudal model underpins the relationships between Tel Aviv and Washington. The United States is the liege lord, and Israel is (and actually wants to be) its vassal. But, beyond ceremonies, what made a vassal useful to his lord? Mostly it was that he commanded a dependent and faithful military force, which even when not used in war could be used to threaten the other vassals. The fundamental interest of the U.S. in the Middle East is to dominate the oil-bearing areas, which are also important to its allies in Europe and the Far East. To this end, its concern is to prevent other Middle Eastern states (or popular movements) from upsetting the convenient status quo. Other Middle Eastern vassals might not want to fight for the liege lord — or their forces might not fight well — but Israel can be depended on: If asked to fight it will fight, and more importantly, it will fight well.

After all, a vassal in a feudal regime who was not able to muster a body of men that fought well for his lord did not survive long. But if his army was in good condition, he was usually forgiven many small — and not so small — acts of disobedience and even impudence. A strong vassal had influence in the court of his lord and could, to a certain extent, manipulate it. Israel is valuable to the U.S. first and foremost because it is a society of Jewish warriors, willing to fight. Without this, it would have been useless to an imperial power such as the U.S. and would have been abandoned by it long ago.

As the majority of the Israeli army is a citizen army, it is relatively cheap to maintain. As Israeli Jews have a relatively high standard of education, they are able to maintain properly the sophisticated equipment so important in modern warfare, especially in the air force. But experience shows that only the ground forces can actually win a

war, while the best an air force can do is to inflict often inconclusive damage. So even more important is the readiness of young Israeli Jews to volunteer for elite combat units, undergo long and gruelling training, and get killed if necessary.

Experience of the eight-year-old Iraq-Iran war, in which perhaps one million people died, together with other regional conflicts, demonstrates that Middle Eastern armies (with the possible exception of the Turkish forces) possess a defensive capability but not an offensive one. They know how to defend themselves in prepared positions when attacked, but when they attack they usually fail ignominiously. But because of its citizen army character — a result of democracy despite its local limitations — the Israeli forces are unique in the region in possessing a good offensive, as well as defensive, capability.

In feudal terms, the other armies can defend walled cities, often well, but are unable to win battles in the field. The Israeli citizen army is much more important than presumed Israeli nuclear weapons. The latter can be used only under the most extreme circumstances, but the army can be used as and when it is needed, and more particularly as and when the U.S. requires its services.

It is this which makes Israel so valuable to the U.S. Interestingly, close relations between Israel and the U.S. date only from 1967, after Israel demonstrated its military power in the June war. (In 1956, after the Suez debacle, the then U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower compelled Israel to withdraw from its conquests in less than a year.)

In capitalist terms, we may call Israel a good U.S. investment, which it would be wasteful for Washington to lose, or even risk losing.

Compared with the strength of Israel's army, such factors as the Jewish lobby in the U.S. (there is also a Christian pro-Israeli lobby, now of no less importance) or the presumed sentimental concerns such as the memory of the holocaust, are in my view of no importance. After all, it was Soviet

leader Josef Stalin who supported Israel in 1948 and supplied it with weapons. Did he do so because of the holocaust or because he wanted access to the armed strength of Israel?

In the politics of naked power, which under the pious cover of a "wish for peace" prevails nearly everywhere and is especially characteristic of American imperial policies of the last 50 years (need I name Vietnam?), it is the strength of the Israeli citizen army and its potential use that is the key to understanding the relationship between the U.S. and Israel, and thus also the Israeli position in the Middle East.

No doubt, the Israeli role in American policy is responsible for much injustice and human suffering, not only in the Middle East, where the Palestinians are its chief victims, but in other regions where Israel has acted for decades as the supplier of weapons to the worst and most cruel dictatorial regimes. I, as an Israeli citizen, desire an Israel that adopts a role other than the one it fulfils now. Our wish should be to alleviate suffering and obtain maximum possible justice.

But the best of wishes will not come true without an understanding of the existing situation. The worst failure of the Arabs, and especially of Palestinians, is that they refuse to see what makes Israel strong and indulge in the same old platitudes, usually about United Nations resolutions.

One of the founders of modern science, Francis Bacon, said: "Knowledge is power." Until, by an application of knowledge, the Middle East emerges from its continuing feudal state, we can only expect with regret that the present situation, with its many injustices, will continue, or will be alleviated only to a minor extent.

The writer lives in Jerusalem and is author of "Open Secrets: Israeli Nuclear and Foreign Policies," and co-author with Norton Minsky of "Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel," due out in September. This article is reprinted from The Observer.

Mulki: Competition led to lower prices of cereals and sugar

By Issam Qadmani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Trade, Industry and Supply Minister Hani Mulki Wednesday said prices of locally-produced cereals have reached their lowest levels in a decade, adding that prices of sugar have also dropped by 10 per cent from JD 300 per tonne to JD 240.

He attributed the drop in prices to the competition created by the government's measures, including changing the method of distributing the subsidy

from coupons to cash and allowing the private sector to import items, whose importation has been previously restricted to the government.

Dr. Mulki pointed out that the government seeks to involve the private sector in various importation-related processes, including transport and distribution of the imported items.

Dr. Mulki said the government will pay the cash subsidy to eligible citizens before 'Eid Al Adha, which falls on April 7.

U.S. central bank head, citing uncertainties, pleads for caution on economy

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan warned Wednesday of "storm clouds" on the economic horizon that could dampen prospects for sustained growth and long-term budget surpluses.

Displaying his legendary caution, Greenspan told the House Budget Committee that the times were "uncertain ... with the U.S. economy now subject to a fine balance of powerful forces of expansion and restraint."

Despite robust growth, low unemployment and near non-existent inflation now enjoyed by the United States, he told lawmakers there are "storm clouds massing over the Western Pacific and heading our way."

Administration visions of federal-budget surpluses from now until 2008 could likewise come undone, according to Greenspan, who warned there was "no guarantee that (such) surpluses over the next few years will actually materialise."

Contraction in Asian economies will take a bite out of U.S. export growth this year and should as a result "exert a discernible drag on total output," the chairman predicted.

In testimony last week, Greenspan said the

economy should expand between two and 2.75 per cent in 1998, down from 3.8 per cent in 1997.

He predicted that the slower growth, brought on by the Asian slowdown, would head off an aggravation in the inflation rate that would otherwise occur in a time of tight labour markets.

But he added it was also possible that surging domestic spending would not in fact be offset by Asian developments.

If that happened, he warned, "the U.S. economy would be on a track along which spending could press too strongly against available resources to be consistent with contained inflation."

Greenspan in addition urged Congress not to bank too heavily on budget surpluses until they were well in hand.

The Congressional Budget Office on Tuesday reported that the federal government would produce a surplus of \$8 billion in fiscal 1998, when ends Sept. 30.

But on Wednesday, Greenspan stressed that "prospects for fiscal 1998 as a whole remain uncertain until we have a tally of the final payments that will be included in April's tax returns."

U.N. report blames Israel for many Palestinian woes

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's repeated security closures of the Palestinian territories and the stalled peace negotiations are the major factors stunting Palestinian economic growth, a U.N. report said Wednesday.

The United Nations, which surveyed 162 private institutions in the Palestinian areas for three years from mid-1994, said Israeli security measures were preventing the free flow of trade and people.

"Labour flows to Israel declined from about 120,000 on a monthly basis in 1992 to under 25,000 in 1996," said the survey, carried out by the U.N. office of the special coordinator in the occupied territories.

The closures also hampered marketing and access for Palestinian businesses and created technical and management difficulties, said the report.

The slow economic growth in the private sector stemmed from a lack of available credit and skilled workers, the report said.

The atmosphere in the region because of the deadlock in the peace process

also caused a drop in investment both in the Palestinian territories and abroad by Palestinians.

According to the Palestinian statistics office, most of the private sector is composed of small businesses of less than three workers. The 50,250 small businesses employ 128,000 people and are responsible for 33.8 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The report called on the Palestinian Authority to invest in the private sector and infrastructure, but also took into account that the Israeli closure meant most public funds had to go instead towards employing Palestinians.

Only the banking, construction and tourism sectors have developed, the report said. From 1994 to 1997, the number of banks in the territories increased from two to 20 with deposits totalling just under one billion dollars.

The total amount of loans represents 30 per cent of all deposits in the Palestinian areas, as opposed to 82 per cent in Israel and 64 per cent in Egypt, according to the survey.

Kuwait pushing for foreign role in oil industry

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait is eager to grant foreign oil firms a role in its oil industry to boost production but it is still searching for a formula acceptable to the Gulf Arab state's parliament and foreign bidders, officials and Western executives said on Wednesday.

"Several foreign firms have presented offers to cooperate in developing our fields and (improve) production methods and we welcome this," a senior oil official told Reuters. "There are many offers and it takes time to study them." But any future change in official policy by the OPEC member must steer away from a "production sharing" formula.

"We know Kuwait has to take its time and we also realise the emotional factor involved in production sharing," said a Western executive whose firm, like other oil majors, is eager to acquire a role in state-controlled upstream operations.

production sharing implies that someone other than the Kuwait government owns the oil and a formula for foreign participation must make sure the title to the oil stays with Kuwait," the executive said.

Industry experts and diplomats say most world oil majors are eagerly waiting in the wings with small technical assistance accords with Kuwait, hoping to upgrade them to some form of participation in lucrative upstream operations.

Kuwait controls about 10 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves. It has an Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quota of 2.19 million barrels per day (bpd).

The government came under attack in parliament last year when talk of granting foreign firms a role in upstream operations resurfaced. Some MPs stress that production sharing would be in violation of the country's constitution.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can calm a friend's nervousness, since you've already been there and done that. You'll run into a similar situation this evening. Another person's problem becomes your chance to help. Your quick action turns a possible disaster into a story with a happy ending.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Someone in a position of authority is eyeing you for a promotion. It's obvious you can handle more responsibility. A friend may lean on you a little too much. Don't bail this person out of a jam. You know how to handle responsibility; now teach your friend how to do it, too.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A friend keeps pushing you to go back to school. You may be resisting more out of habit than anything else. Actually, you'd love to go to school. There's something you could take that would help you in your present circumstances. It has to do with computers.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You may be feeling agitated, but don't worry — this is how it always feels when you're growing or learning. Change is definitely underway, and you're in the middle of it. People are expecting more of you than ever, with good reason. The amazing ideas you've been coming up with recently are attracting attention.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A friend is trying to take off in about four directions at once. This person doesn't have your objectivity, however. That's where you can help. In a supportive way, point out the obvious pitfalls you see. Suggest that more time is necessary before making a decision.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) There are too many distractions, and each job seems to have top priority. Everyone you know thinks you should do it all. You've made other people depend on you more than you should have. Delegate some of the responsibility back to them.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The challenge won't be in coming up with ideas, but in following through on them. Pick a couple of the best ones for now and save the rest for later. If you can disburse some of them to others, do so. You could keep about a dozen people busy.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A loved one is practically in a dither. It looks like the plan isn't going right. Advise patience. By tomorrow, things will start to settle down. Remember the old adage about having to break a lot of eggs to make an omelette? Well, you're at the egg-breaking stage.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Several people are trying to understand what you're talking about. They're trying to let go of their old perceptions and see from your point of view. They admire you, because you always seem to be so happy and satisfied. Don't laugh if they make silly mistakes.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You're being asked to use skills you only recently acquired. Your experience doesn't really fit, but it's giving you the confidence you need. There's money to be made here, and you're going to be one of the people who makes it. Just do the next thing that's in front of you.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Romance will be easier for you today than it has been in quite a while. Money may still be something of a problem, however. That's annoying, since you'd like to take this person someplace special for dinner tonight. Have a picnic, instead, or a nice meal at home. Those can be even more romantic, with the right person.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You may be rearranging furniture or even moving to a new location. Or perhaps you're changing roommates. It's definitely the end of one phase and the beginning of another. Whether or not it's to your advantage is up to you. Trust your intuition, but also do the planning.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're under a bit of stress this morning. A situation others might find simple has you tossed into a frenzy. It could be leftover tension from yesterday that's causing the problem. Heed a gentle friend's advice to settle down. Everything will work out well, and you don't have to make sure it happens. Let others take care of you for a change.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're in for a rude awakening. Something you thought you had all figured out may not go quite as planned. It may even backfire on you. Also, watch out for accidents caused by impetuous behaviour. Not to worry. Everything calms down by dinnertime.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You may have to turn down an invitation this morning due to a lack of funds. Don't despair. This might be just the motivation you need. Maybe you're not using enough of your natural talents. Remember the old line about finding a need and filling it? That's still a good way to make a fortune.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Something you start around midday is practically guaranteed to succeed. Knowing that in advance, obviously you'll start as many things around then as possible. You'll also be good with words at that time. Don't be intimidated by a gruff character. Just relax. You'll wow 'em.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's an accident waiting to happen this morning and it wouldn't necessarily be your fault. Just because you're a good driver doesn't mean everybody else on the road is. Drive defensively. By the way, it's a good time to make sure you have enough insurance coverage.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A meeting should go well this morning, after an initial hassle. The confrontation is about where to get the money. You get to be the moderator. Coax them out of the emotional level by presenting the facts over and over again.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're looking sharp again today, but your patience may be short. Try not to get too irritated with an older person who has a tendency to whine. That's especially true if this person also happens to be the one who signs your paycheck. Stifle even the least little snide comment.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There's a bit of a hassle first thing this morning, but then conditions start to mellow out. By afternoon, you'll see the fruits of your labour begin to materialise. The idea you've been trying to bring about will turn out to be even better than you'd hoped.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You were thinking that your goal was unattainable because you didn't have enough education. Now the education you're acquiring is making the goal look not only possible, but practically easy. Next, you need to confront whether you're actually willing to have a fantasy turn into reality.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you want to attract the best person for you, tone down your approach a little. The one you need is a quiet, sensitive type. You have a tendency to get a little bit bossy. If you've got the perfect person in your life already, make sure to show your appreciation.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The difficulty you're facing isn't mechanical. That's the problem — it's emotional. No need to panic. Just remember to be sympathetic. If you can't muster that, at least listen patiently. Then suggest that the job be completed. It's worth a try.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'd like to do something very special for a loved one this evening, but you're afraid of the cost. Don't worry. You're feeling extravagant, but you also have natural inhibitors that will prevent you from going over budget. Everything will work out well.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

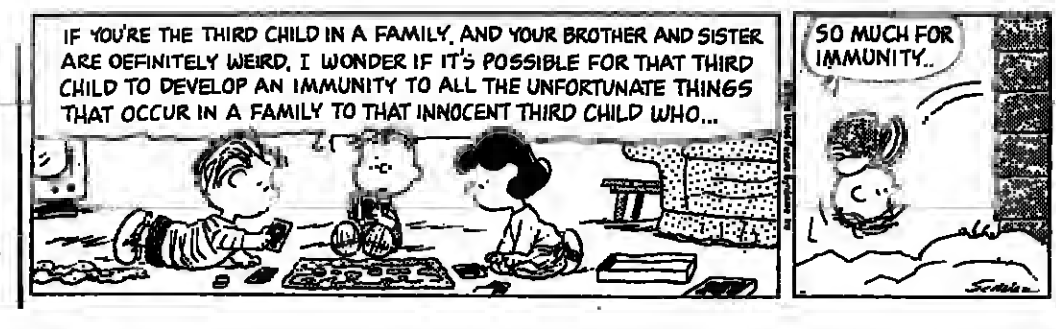
ACROSS

1. Huh?
5. The Maltese Falcon co-star
10. Withered
14. Charlie Chaplin's wife
15. Run after someone
16. Beyond
17. Reeling atop
18. Showy lily
19. Explosive report
20. End of time overlapping
21. Inherit
23. Language suffix
24. On (in) (in)
25. Edit
29. Barister
32. Self-image
35. Ms. Rogers St. Johns
36. This covering
37. Policy
38. First intimation overlapping
41. Italian treats
42. Periods of time
43. Old hat
44. Lair
45. Unwrap
46. Midpoint
47. Sandra or Ruby
49. Hearing organ
50. Assembly point overlapping
51. Phone number
59. Ear flap
60. Also known as
61. Genesis man
62. Well That Ends Well
63. The table constellation
64. Partial: pref.
65. Red vegetable
66. Input data
67. Transport allowance

DOWN

1. The Calne Muttiny's author
2. Arizona tribe
3. Some time hence
4. Zesty bite
5. Confront
6. Dispirit
7. Dusting powder
8. Norway's capital
9. Enlarge a hole
10. Wyman movie
11. Preacher
12. Tenor's expense
13. Therefore: Lat.
21. Rot
22. Jellied delicacy
25. Fast
26. Draw out
27. Trustworthy
28. Swiss range
29. Alternative beau
30. Alternatives to lagers
31. Little devil
33. Gander's mate
34. Proprietor
36. Fairway call
37. Comic Laurel
38. Rebel general
40. "Norma" or "Louise"
45. Can. province
46. Roman
48. Give off
49. Wipe out
50. Substantial chunk
51. Lacquered metalware
52. Title
53. Highland valley
54. "Misbehavin"
55. Pick players
56. River into the Baltic
57. Knight's lady
58. Send out

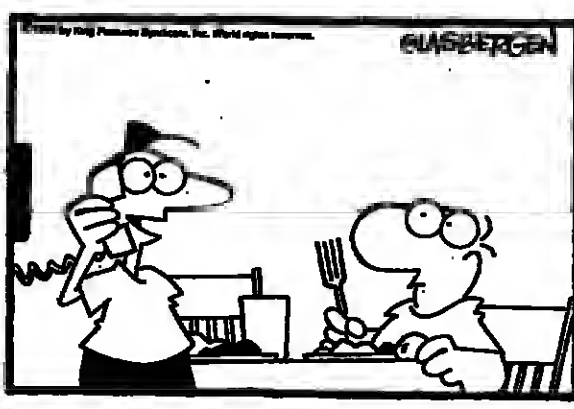
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

PRIVE
YUPPP
LIERIX
EECDAC

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argillon



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: A O O O O O OF THE O O O O O O (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: BORAX JUROR ECZEMA CATTLE
Answer: When the champ tried to wrap the gift he became this — AN AMAIEUR "BOXER"

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Government may provide additional incentives for investments in less privileged regions

**** THE GOVERNMENT** is expected to amend the investment promotion law soon to encourage investment in Jordan in general and, particularly, in areas classified as C in the law.

The new amendment, which is being also discussed in the Lower House of Parliament, will give additional specific incentives to investors who choose to set up projects "in less fortunate areas." The incentives which aim at encouraging investments in those areas will be on top of exemptions provided in the present law.

According to article seven of the present law, industrial, agricultural, hotel, hospital, marine transport and railway projects are given varied exemptions from income and social services tax. If established in the A-classified zone, the exemption rate is 25 per cent. The exemption rises to 50 per cent and 75 per cent if the projects are established in zone B and zone C respectively.

In a separate article, Investment Promotion Corporation (IPC) Director General Munasser Oqlah said that an investor directory is being prepared in addition to an information bank within the institution. The bank will include investment information about all the laws, regulations and measures that govern the investment process in Jordan and information about direct foreign investment

which will be classified according to sectors and countries. Also to be included in the bank are all foreign capital inflows and outflows to and from Jordan.

Dr. Oqlah said the IPC will conduct a field survey at the end of each year on all new projects benefiting from the investment promotion law. The survey aims at compiling statistics of the projects that were really implemented and at specifying the benefits gained by them out of the total investments listed to benefit according to the law. Furthermore, the aim is to evaluate the IPC role in facilitating the procedures.

The corporation is currently studying and analysing the reasons behind some investors backing down from implementing their investments after having obtained the necessary approval. Dr. Oqlah said. He added that based on such an analysis, the IPC will recommend the necessary measure to encourage the investors to carry out the projects and raise the rate of the schemes actually implemented.

The IPC chief emphasised that the most important objective to be achieved in the short term is to determine shift towards "sectoral promotion" while maintaining the promotion for some joint projects during the process of identifying the target sectors and the potential foreign investors (Al Aswaq + Al Dustour).

UAE's Habtoor Group suspends Lebanon investments

DUBAI (R) — Dubai's Al Habtoor Group said Sunday it had decided to freeze plans to invest about \$200 million in Lebanon because of what it considered a complex bureaucracy and rigid investment laws.

"We have decided to suspend unfinished projects in Lebanon because the investment atmosphere in Lebanon is not encouraging and is hampered by routine bureaucracy," Rami Shehab Eddine, the group's manager of research and studies, told Reuters.

"The decision by the Dubai National Investment Co. (Al Habtoor) group's investment arm, covers a five-star hotel which was to be built at the cost of \$45 million and a \$150 million housing and leisure complex," he said.

Mr. Shehab Eddine said the group was also seriously reviewing other investments it had made in Lebanon including loans, land and a 10 per cent share the Beirut-based First National Bank.

But he said liquidating the group's stake in the bank was unlikely at this stage in order "to protect the interests of other Gulf Arab shareholders in the bank."

Lebanon's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates George Siam said he was taking the matter up with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri and the investment development authority in Beirut.

"We have no knowledge of any complaints filed by the Al Habtoor Group in Lebanon to the investment authorities...we are willing to check any specific incident," Mr. Siam told Reuters.

"Investing in Lebanon has its unique characteristics that the Al Habtoor Group may not have been used to," he said without elaborating.

The group may have entered into unsound or unstudied partnerships or it may have expected to reap unreasonably high profits within a short period of time, he said.

Mr. Shehab Eddine said the group had already spent sizeable sums on design and consultancy work for the two cancelled projects and had incurred losses from the sale of its share in a housing complex at Jammour, 20 kilometres southeast of Beirut.

He said the group had invested \$30 million in the Jammour project and had sold at a loss of \$19 million.

"We are unable to retrieve the \$11 million outstanding from the sale of the Jammour complex," Mr. Shehab Eddine said.

The Dubai-based Al Habtoor Group has widespread investments in Gulf Arab states, Europe, the United States and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In Dubai, the group is agent for Britain's Rolls-Royce Motors, Saab Automobile and Japan's Mitsubishi Motors. Saab is jointly owned by Swedish investment group Investor AB and General Motors.

Unicef

The United Nations Children's Fund, with headquarters in New York and Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa based in Amman, seeks qualified candidates for the following position:

Communication Officer Duty Station: Amman-Jordan

Purpose of the Post:

To be responsible for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of information, communication and fund-raising strategies, that fulfill the core regional responsibilities for communication, information and advocacy, and for resource mobilisation in the region.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Advanced University Degree in Communication, Journalism or International Affairs.
- Minimum five years of progressive experience in information and communication related to social development at national and international levels, three years of which should be in developing countries.
- Excellence in English and Arabic. Knowledge of French desirable.

Skills and Attributes:

- Proven skills in fund-raising, information and communication, networking, advocacy and ability to relate this to mass media, donor institutions, the corporate sector and government officials.
- Knowledge of fund-raising techniques, particularly for social development agencies.
- Knowledge of donor organisations and their modus operandi, especially in the MENA region.
- Excellence in using computer systems and applications, particularly DTP and Power Point.
- Proven capacity to design, implement and evaluate development communication programmes.
- Proven ability to formulate, plan and execute ideas as well as transfer knowledge and skills.
- Ability to express clearly and concisely ideas and concepts in written and oral form, both in Arabic and English.
- Ability to organise and implement training.
- Ability to travel extensively mainly in the Middle East and North Africa.

Please send detailed resume, in English, quoting reference NO 98-01 to:

**Asst. Admin/Personnel Officer
UNICEF Regional Office
P.O. Box 840028, Amman 11184 - Jordan**

Applications for this position must be received by 5 April 1998. Acknowledgement will only be sent to short listed candidates under serious consideration.

UNICEF is a smoke-free environment.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates		Prices as at 4/3/98 20:11	
US Dollar	1.8165	0.6074	1.4777
DE Mark	0.8995	0.3342	0.9135
GB Sterling	1.8483	2.8930	2.4342
CHF Franc	0.8787	1.2282	0.4103
JP Yen	0.0079	1.4331	0.4787
CA Dollar	0.7034	1.2701	0.4261
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0167	0.3386
NL Guilder	0.4985	0.8801	0.2996
FR Franc	0.1641	0.2979	0.0886

Middle Eastern Currencies		Prices as at 4/3/98 20:11	
US Dollar	0.7085	0.3704	3.6400
Jordan Dinar	1.4114	0.2364	0.5321
Saudi Riyal	0.2988	0.1888	0.1005
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8786	9.9488
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1946	1.0303
Kuwait Dinar	3.2782	2.3228	12.2844
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1829	1.0212
Lebanese L1000	0.95	0.4637	2.4545
Egyptian	0.2941	0.2084	1.1031

Energy		Mid-East Currencies	
Brent	13.18	SA Riyal	0.2565
WTI	12.28	AE Dirham	0.2723
Bonny	13.18	KW Dinar	3.2782
Dubai	10.71	BH Dinar	0.3770
UL Gas	158.00	CY Pound	1.8762

Metal Prices		Currency Deposit Rates (Bld)	
Gold (oz's)	285.9	USD	5.56
Silver (oz's)	6.32	GBP	7.25
Platinum (oz's)	384.5	JPY	0.80
AL (3 Months)	384.5	DEM	3.38
CU (3 Months)	384.5	FRF	3.83
Zinc (3 Months)	384.5	CHF	0.75
Lead (3 Months)	384.5	ITL	5.03
Ni (3 Months)	384.5		

Energy		JOD Cross Rates	
Coffee (c/lbs)	158.75	US Dollar	0.708
Coconut (c/lbs)	1911	GB Sterling	1.1677
Sugar (c/lbs)	272	DE Mark	0.3906
Wheat (c/lbs)	0	CHF Franc	0.4837
Soya (c/lbs)	28.42	FR Franc	0.1165
Tee (c/lbs)	190	JP Yen	0.0027
Barley (c/lbs)	0	NL Guilder	0.3486
Rice (c/lbs)	400	IT Lira	0.3989

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UEFA Cup

Goals are few and far between

PARIS (AFP) — Goals were few and far between in the UEFA Cup quarter-final first-leg ties on Tuesday and Inter Milan, Lazio, and Atletico had to be satisfied with taking just one goal with them to their away clashes in a fortnight's time.

Ronaldo inspired Inter Milan to a 1-0 victory over Germany's holders Schalke 04 by scoring after 17 minutes in the return of last season's final final. The first two minutes could not have been more tense.

Two names — Schalke's Johan De Kock (for with a scything tackle from behind on Ronaldo after 40 seconds) and Inter's Salvatore Fiesi — found themselves in the referee's book.

But while Inter applied the early pressure and dictated a frenetic pace — it was the German side who had the first real scoring chance.

Martin Max was put through after eight minutes, but Inter goalkeeper and captain Gianluca Pagliuca got down and blocked the

shot. Inter winger Francesco Moriero forced a reflex save at the other end from Jens Lehmann a few minutes later when he pounced on a bungled clearance, while Pagliuca was soon at full stretch to push a dangerous low shot from Wilmots round the post.

But if the chances came thick and fast, only Ronaldo had the skill to turn one into a goal. It came after working a neat one-two with Frenchman Youri Djorkaeff.

Christian Vieri, who presurised Aston Villa's defence throughout, scored just before half-time to give Atletico Madrid their win — a result which should satisfy the English Premiership visitors.

Vieri had forced the Villa goalkeeper Mark Bosnich to make a series of breathtaking saves, finally found the net — but with a penalty four minutes before the half-time whistle.

The referee had no hesitation in awarding the kick after Ugo Ehiogu had



Brazilian Inter Milan's striker Ronaldo (R) fights for control of the ball with Schalke 04's Dutch Johan De Kock during their UEFA quarterfinal match (Reuters photo)

brought down Jose Caminero. The new Aston Villa man-

ager John Gregory must feel confident that the English side can now reach the semifinals of the competition for the first time in their history.

Villa's best chance came when Dwight Yorke and Stan Collymore combined to find Lee Hendrie in space on the edge of the area. But after taking a couple of strides Hendrie drilled his shot over the bar.

The English club suffered a setback in the 50th minute when Stan Collymore, their two-goal hero against Liverpool in the weekend league clash, limped out of the action with a foot injury.

Second-half substitute Pierluigi Casiraghi scored the only goal for Lazio who hosted plucky French opponents Auxerre.

The 28-year-old Italian international striker, who is first choice for his country but not for his club, scored within seconds of coming on in the 64th minute.

The Italians were reduced to 10 men shortly afterwards when Yugoslav international Vladimir Jugovic was sent off for his second bookable offence. But they held on for the win.

Casiraghi, who was maintaining his record of scoring in every round so far, hooked the ball home from an acute angle after Auxerre keeper Lionel Charbonnier had completely missed Pavel Nedved's cross.

Former Juventus star Jugovic was sent off by 43-year-old Belgian referee Michel Piroux, who made several controversial decisions during the match. He was given a second yellow

card when he brought down Bernard Diomede.

Diomede, who had earlier missed a sixth-minute sitter, nearly made the Italians pay when he sent a marvellous curling free-kick from the right which hit Luca Marchegiani's crossbar and bounced away to safety.

Russian striker Alexander Shirokov scored a goal in each half as Spartak Moscow scored an upset 3-1 win away to Ajax.

First he rounded off a slick three-man attacking move in the 26th minute, slotting the ball home from close range and he then made it 2-0 seven minutes after half-time.

Ajax briefly rekindled their hopes when Georgian Shota Arveladze, who had scored a hat-trick against Nijmegen at the weekend, swept the ball home in the 57th-minute after good work by tricky Nigerian winger Tijani Babangida.

But Spartak scored a third goal, albeit against the run of play, when Valery Kechinov cut in from the right after a clever pass from Dimitri Alenichev and beat goalkeeper Edwin van der Saar with a low shot in the 84th minute.

Ajax, winner of six European trophies in their illustrious history and UEFA Cup champions in 1992, went into the match as heavy favourites but found Spartak, Russian champions for the fifth time in six years, in a dangerous mood despite their lack of match-practice in the Russian winter.

77 entries compete in Aqaba Endurance Race

Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The first endurance race of the season takes place this weekend in Aqaba with 77 entries attempting the 60km race organised by the Royal Equestrian Federation under the patronage of HRH Princess Alia.

Princess Alia has eight horses entered, HRH Princess Zein's Jaf'ar stables have two, and HRH Prince Ali also has two. There are five lady riders in the field.

The race functions as a qualifier for October's Emirates Airlines Endurance Race which is the highlight of the domestic season. Any entry which completes Friday's race will qualify for this event.

Two vets will ensure the safety of the horses, who will be disqualified during the race if their heartbeat rate exceeds 64 per second. The chief vet hails from Britain, and other vets are made available from the Ministry of Agriculture. There are also several student vets.

Riders must also comply with international FEI rules which state that no flog-

ging or abuse of horses is allowed; no stirrups or whips may be used; no illegal drugs ingested and the weight of riders with saddles should exceed 75kg. Furthermore, the horse must not run faster than 15kph nor less than 12kph.

Pre-race favourite is Sabil Sa'ad, who is ridden by Jocelyn Abu Ragheb. She and His Excellency Mohammad Al Saleh came eleventh in last year's World Cup in Qatar, where Jordan was first amongst Arab countries, and an astonishing sixth in the world.

The race is scheduled to start at 9 a.m. and it is estimated the last rider will finish at around 2 p.m.

Meanwhile, three riders from Jordan are participating in the Abu Dhabi International Showjumping event, which boasts some of the strongest nations in the world. Hani Bisharat, Sinan Nashashibi and Sireen Rasekh will take on participants from Great Britain, France, Belgium and four other European nations, as well as hosts the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria.

The event concludes Friday.

Seeds scattered at first hurdle

ROTTERDAM (AFP) — Jonas Bjorkman, Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Goran Ivanisevic all crashed in their first matches at the \$750,000 ATP tournament here Tuesday.

The second-seeded Bjorkman won a first set tie-break but then slumped to bow out 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-4 to Spaniard Tomas Carbonell.

Kafelnikov, the fourth seed who beat Frenchman Cedric Pioline in Sunday's final at Battersea Park in London, went down 7-6 (7/5) 6-2 to Sweden's Thomas Johansson.

And seventh-seed Ivanisevic continued his dismal start to the season when he was beaten by Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands 5-7, 7-6 (8/6), 6-3.

Other Tuesday winners included Frenchman Guillaume Raoux, Kenneth Carlsen of Denmark and Davide Scala of Italy.

SCOREBOARD

NBA			
Utah	108	Toronto	99
New York	94	New Jersey	91
Seattle	97	Miami	91 (OT)
Dallas	110	Minnesota	99
Chicago	118	Denver	90
Houston	107	LA Clippers	97
Portland	98	Phoenix	93
Indiana	111	Vancouver	103

Sevensdale ATP tournament

Sergei Sargisyan (Arm) bt Ramon Delgado (Par)	6-2, 3-6, 6-1
Sebastien Lareau (Can) bt Marcelo Filippini (Uru)	6-0, 6-4
Jan-Michel Gambill (USA) bt Mark Woodforde (Aus)	6-4, 2-6, 7-5
Andrea Gaudenzi (Ita) bt Fernando Meligeni (Bra)	6-1, 6-4
Richard Fromberg (Aus) bt Thomas Meunier (Ger)	6-1, 6-3
Tommy Haas (Ger) bt Michael Joyce (USA)	6-2, 6-2
Mark Philippoussis (Aus) bt Franco Squillari (Arg)	6-2, 7-5
Stefan Stohr (Aus) bt Christian Rind (Nor)	6-3, 6-7 (8/10), 6-3

Rotterdam ATP tournament

Guillaume Raoux (Fra) bt Daniel Vacek (Cze)	6-2, 6-3
Kenneth Carlsen (Den) bt Vladimir Litvinchuk (Cze)	4-6, 6-3, 6-0
Thomas Carbonell (Spa) bt Jonas Bjorkman (Swe)	6-7 (5/7), 6-3
Davide Scala (Ita) bt John van Lottum (Ned)	6-3, 6-2
Jan Siemerink (Ned) bt Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	7-6 (8/6), 6-3

UEFA Cup

Inter Milan (Ita)	Auxerre (Fra)
1-0	0-1
Lazio (Ita)	Spartak Moscow (Rus)
1-0	1-3
Aston Villa (Eng)	Schalke 04 (Ger)
0-0	0-1



Lazio's forward Pierluigi Casiraghi celebrates after he scored a goal against Auxerre during their UEFA Cup quarter-final first leg match (Reuters photo)

Mubarak gives highest sports award to Egypt's 'Pharaohs' team

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday presented the country's highest sports award to the Egyptian national football team which won the African Nations Cup.

At a ceremony in the presidential palace of Ithabadeya here, Mubarak presented the award for "sports distinction of the highest order" to team coach Mahmoud Al Gohari and nine co-trainers, including the team doctor.

Mubarak then gave the same award to the 21 players of the national selection team who took part in the African Nations Cup championship in Ouagadougou on Saturday. The first award to the players went to Hossam Hassan, whose seven goals made him the highest scorer in the championship along with Benedict McCarthy of South Africa.

Hady Khashaba, the 22nd player on the Egyptian team, did not go to Ouagadougou due to the illness of his child. Mubarak also presented the award to three Arab broadcasters with the private Saudi television station Orbit for "sincerely showing true sympathy" for the Egyptian team, the Pharaohs.

The three announcers were Khaled Al Harban of Kuwait, Khaled Yassin of Morocco, and Abdul-Meguid Al Shtali of Tunisia. Mubarak also presented the award to the Egyptian announcer for the Arab Radio Broadcasting Union, Ahmed Shubeir.

In additions to cash gifts from businessmen, each of the 21 players will receive an official award of \$15,000, while coach Gohari will get \$23,000.

The Egyptian Football Federation announced Tuesday that the president of the Arab Football Federation, Saudi Prince Faisal Ben Fahd, had given Egypt's national football team and coach \$300,000 for winning the cup.

Gohari and his team received a triumphant welcome back to Cairo Sunday, with Mubarak and more than 30,000 fans greeting them at the airport.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Goram may leave Rangers

LONDON (AFP) — Andy Goram the Rangers goalkeeper said Wednesday he may be forced to quit Ibrox unwillingly if he is not offered a new contract by the club. The Scottish international's current contract ends as this season draws to a close and he is already considering other options ahead of the arrival of new boss Dick Advocaat in the summer. Crystal Palace are reported to be the latest club to show an interest in the 33-year-old keeper, whose career at Ibrox has been up and down. Goram said: "I could go to the World Cup and not have a club. That's a possibility I have already taken into consideration. It's frustrating because everybody knows that I want to stay at Rangers. People know my feelings for this club, but if changes have to be made they have to be made."

Maier pulls out of downhill

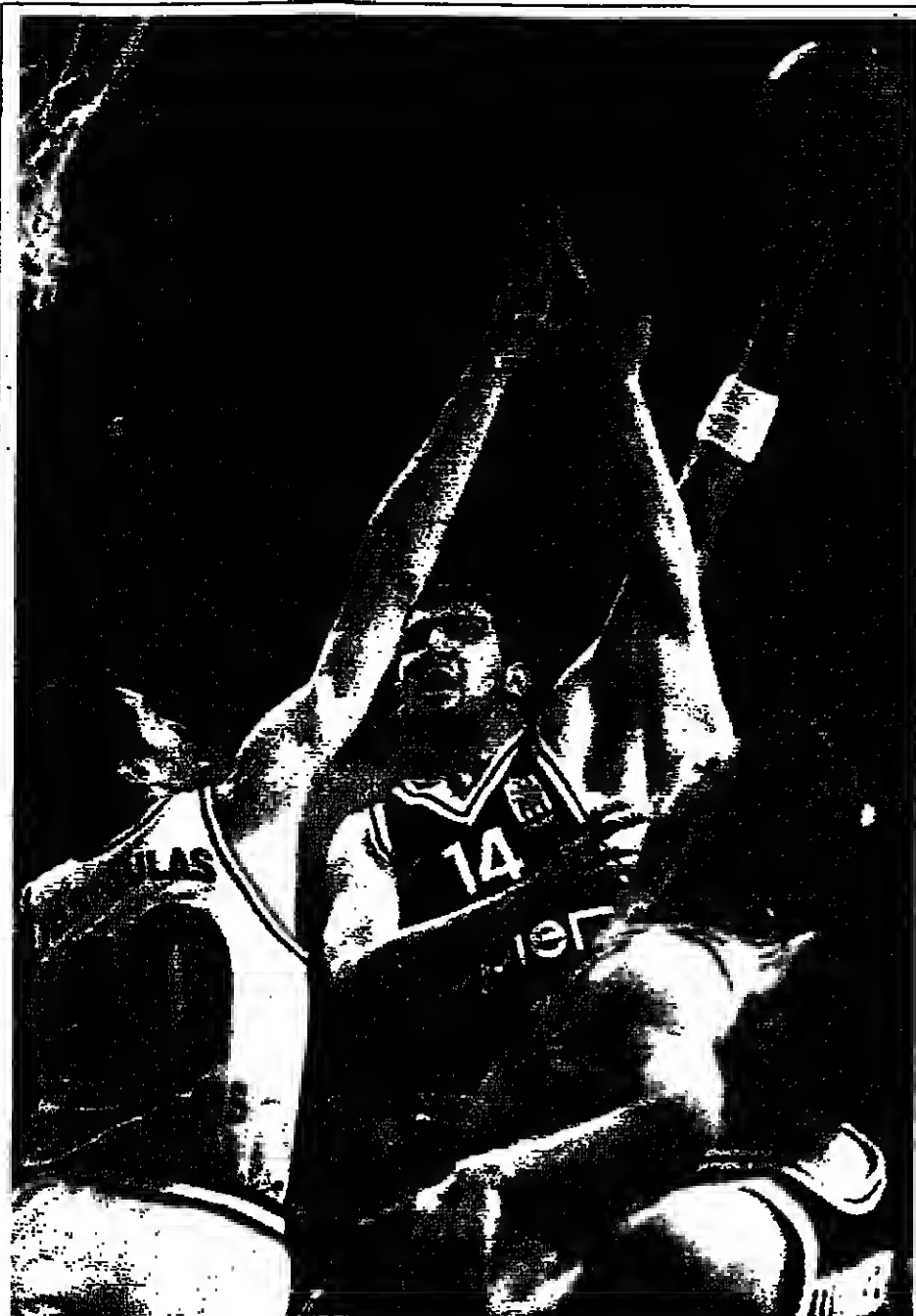
VIENNA (AFP) — Austria's dual Olympic gold medalist Herman Maier withdrew on Tuesday from Saturday's World Cup downhill to be held in Kvitfjell, Norway. The 25-year-old, who rebounded from a spectacular fall in the

Olympic downhill to win the Super-G and giant-slamolom, has a back injury which he aggravated during last weekend's giant slalom in South Korea. The former bricklayer, nicknamed "The Herminator" after his 10 World Cup wins this season, hopes, however, to compete in Sunday's Super-G.

Jamaicans to play QPR

LONDON (AFP) — World Cup qualifiers Jamaica are to play a friendly match against English First Division side Queen's Park Rangers later this month. The "Reggae Boyz", who were refused permission to play the Republic of Ireland at QPR's ground, will instead field a full-strength side in a testimonial match for Rangers midfielder Simon Barker on March 22. It will be the first time the Jamaicans — who boast several English-based stars in their squad — have played in Europe. Jamaican Football Federation President Horace Burrell said: "We hope the Jamaicans in London pack the QPR ground to capacity for this worthy cause."

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Partizan center Petrag Drobnjak (C) goes for a basket over Olympiakos players Panagiotis Fasoulas (L) and Michael Hawkins during their Euroleague '98 basketball match in Athens March 3. Yugoslav defeated Olympiakos 78-74 (Reuters photo)

JD10 million needed to prepare for and host Pan-Arab Games — Fawwaz

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — While Sept. 1999 might seem too far away for most people, it is not the case for those involved with the Kingdom's preparations for hosting the next Pan-Arab Games.

The recent meeting of the Council of Arab Sports Ministers in Cairo officially confirmed Jordan as host nation and increased aid to the Kingdom to enable it to prepare infrastructure and update sports facilities ahead of the largest gathering of Arab youth.

Officials were able to lobby for assistance after the Arab Sports Federation (ASF) slashed the time remaining for the event by deciding to advance the date to 1999 because of the decision to hold the 2nd Southeast Asian Games in Beirut in 2001 and the Mediterranean Games in Tunisia in the same year.

In a telephone interview with the Jordan Times, Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Vice-President Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz, said everything was now in place to work towards the event.

"The ball is now in our court. And we have to utilise things so that everything is crowned successfully," Dr. Fawwaz said.

He added that the aid from the

Arab League had been raised to \$300,000 while the Council of Arab Ministers would grant \$1,000,000 instead of \$700,000.

Additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid would be garnered through slashing the 50 per cent ASF margin of profit on promotion and television coverage in addition to selling television broadcasting rights to private companies, which would secure millions needed to cover costs.

"We can actually make a profit, if we play it smart," Dr. Fawwaz said.

The JOC official said plans included the building of a multi-purpose indoor stadium at Al Hussein Youth City with a capacity for 7,000 spectators; an Olympic-size swimming pool; a track and field stadium and electronic timing machines.

He pointed out that the rest of the facilities would be utilised at private universities and educational institutions that have already expressed their willingness to host some of the events.

Dr. Fawwaz, however, underlined the fact that most of the committees formed recently needed to be activated especially since achieving positive results required the overall preparation of athletes including training, friendly competitions, nutrition and health care.

The flag of the 9th Pan-Arab Games was officially hoisted at Amman International Stadium on Dec. 28 and a preparatory committee, headed by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, was formed to oversee the preparations for the Arab Games.

Several committees are working alongside including the competitions committee, national teams, equipment and technical supplies, national referees, and the medical committee.

Dr. Fawwaz said that sports officials had asked the government to allocate JD10 million to cover all needed expenses for preparing and hosting the event.

"Committees are not yet sure of the budget that will be set aside for the event and therefore their plans might be delayed because of this. However, JD2 million has been set for this year."

Jordanian officials were quoted as saying that the allocated budget was not adequate to ensure proper preparation and build new sports facilities.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games last year, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help in erecting sport facilities, which were destroyed during the civil war.

The 1997 Beirut Games witnessed the best Jordanian showing

since the Pan-Arab Games were launched. Competing in 14 of the 20 events, Jordan finished 5th overall among 19 competing countries, taking a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals.

Jordan's athletes gained more gold medals in Beirut than in all the past 7 Pan-Arab Games together where they took a total of 49 medals, including 7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze.

The Amman Games will include 12 principal events: soccer, basketball, volleyball, handball, athletics, gymnastics, swimming, boxing, weightlifting, wrestling, equestrian, cycling and table tennis. Squash, taekwondo, chess or any other events could be added by the organising committee which also decides the mascot.

The event will also be followed by a Special Arab Games for the Handicapped.

The Pan-Arab Games have only been held eight times: Alexandria in 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.

Tyrrell's owners shop for Villeneuve

MELBOURNE (AFP) — British American Racing (BAR), the new owners of the Tyrrell racing team, are pursuing world champion Jacques Villeneuve to drive for them in their debut 1999 Formula One season.

"Villeneuve's long-time associate and former manager Craig Pollock, who is now the managing director of BAR, spoke here Wednesday ahead of Sunday's curtain-raising Australian Grand Prix about his plans to entice the 26-year-old Canadian to the moderately-performing Tyrrell team.

Villeneuve's contract with the champion Williams team expires at the end of this year when he will be free to leave for Tyrrell if he wishes.

It is a prospect that Pollock, backed by the financial muscle of giant tobacco conglomerate BAT, relishes.

"If Jacques drives for me it would be a dream because we are so tight together," Pollock said.

"It would be fantastic, but he has his own career. He has to go to a team where he has the best chance of winning.

"I think his aim is not to win one championship or two championships, but to try and

beat Juan Manuel Fangio's five championships."

Should Pollock be rebuffed by his long-time friend to switch teams, he has the money to chase after two-time world champion and Villeneuve's 1998 title rival, Michael Schumacher.

"If we can't go after Jacques, we can go for Schumacher — why shouldn't we try to get him, we have the finances and the package to make a bid for him," said Pollock.

Schumacher is reportedly on \$35 million a year with Ferrari.

"Yes, we can afford it, we have a well-funded team."

BAT are reportedly prepared to inject 300 million dollars into their Formula One venture over five years.

Schumacher, who was stripped of his second place finish in the championship last year after ramming Villeneuve during the season-ending Jerez GP last October, is contracted to Ferrari through to the end of the 1999 season.

"But it is believed his contract is performance-based, giving Schumacher a possible get-out.

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Confident Australian Mark Philippoussis upheld the first top-seed ranking of his career with a 6-2, 7-5 win Tuesday into the second round of the \$340,000 Franklin Templeton Classic in Scottsdale.

Defending champion "Scud" from Melbourne, got off to a solid start at the desert event on a brilliant, sunny day at the Princess resort.

The World No. 13 — his best ranking so far — rolled over Argentine Franco Squillari to face Tommy Haas in the second round. The young German defeated American Michael Joyce 6-2, 6-2 in his opener.

"I'm hitting the ball well and I'm very comfortable on the court," said Philippoussis, winner of the Memphis title over Michael Chang last month. "Things are still flowing from Memphis."

"I'm at the fittest stage of my career. My expectations are high. I'm looking to win every tournament."

One of the biggest names in tennis, Boris Becker, had no luck.

Hours before his night-time first-round contest against compatriot Nicolas Kiefer, the former world No. 1 withdrew with a back injury, replaced in the draw by Australian lucky loser Scott Draper.

Injury-plagued Becker pulled out due to a back injury, one of a string of problems (ankle, wrist, calf) that he has faced over the past several seasons and which no doubt contributed to his 1997 decision to wind down his career.

The 30-year-old German will be concentrating on Davis Cup coaching duties and will limit his ATP Tour play. He has said that he will

not play in any more Grand Slam events.

Becker underwent a computer scan on his back. His participation in next week's Mercedes Super 9 next week Indian Wells, California, and the Lipton in Key Biscayne now remain in doubt.

World No. 66 Becker and German Thomas Messner won a doubles match here on Monday night with Becker serving poorly with a top speed of around 90 kph.

Last month, Becker withdrew from an ATP Tour event in Dubai after tearing an abdominal muscle and missed last

week's tournament in Philadelphia as a result. His back injury is thought to be connected with the abdominal problem.

Since the start of 1997, Becker has pulled out of 11 events through injury and has a 2-1 match record in 1998.

The German was to have been playing his first tournament on American soil in almost two years. His last performance of note in the States was a semifinal at the U.S. Open in September, 1995.

He last played in North America at Indian Wells, California, in March, 1996.

In other first-round matches, American qualifier Jan-Michel Gambill beat Australian Mark Woodforde 6-4, 2-6, 7-5 and Italy's Andrea Gaudenzi ousted Fernando Meligeni of Brazil 6-1, 6-4.

U.S.-based Armenian Sargis Sargsian, who attended university in Arizona, beat Ramon Delgado of Paraguay 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 while Canadian Sebastian Lareau reached the second round over Marcelo Filippini of Uruguay 6-0, 6-4.

Hi-tech answer to World Cup scoring disputes

PARIS (AFP) — Technology to rule out any arguments over whether a goal has really been scored could be used at the 1998 World Cup football finals in France.

The International Football Association Board — the game's rule-maker — will consider adopting the technology when it meets here on Friday.

The biggest argument over whether a goal is a goal came at the 1966 World Cup final in London between England and West Germany when Geoff Hurst's shot bounced back out after hitting the underside of the crossbar.

The Swiss referee awarded the goal after consulting his Soviet linesman but it is still impossible to tell from TV replays whether the ball actually did cross the line to give England a vital 3-2 lead.

FIFA, the game's governing body, last year told the German federation to stop overruling referees who had awarded goals after TV later proved the ball had not crossed the line.

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Translation of U.N. resolution on Iraq causes semantic quarrel

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. resolution 1154 warning Iraq to uphold its agreement on U.N. weapons inspections may have prevented a war but not a battle in semantics between French and English diplomats.

The dispute centres on the resolution's English phrase "any violation would have severe consequences for Iraq," which the U.N. officially translated into the French, "any violation would have very serious consequences for Iraq."

Some diplomats insist that France chose that translation from among several alternatives, including "the most serious consequences," in order to subtly alter the scope of the warning given Iraq, at least in French. U.N. documents are routinely translated into six languages.

The different interpretations of resolution 1154 are not to be taken lightly, since the English text has prompted U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson to claim a win for his government.

"This was a big victory for us because we got change from 'very serious consequences' to 'severe.' So we got even more than what we wanted," Richardson said Tuesday.

The 15 Security Council

members on Monday unanimously adopted resolution 1154, which upholds the Feb. 23 agreement signed in Baghdad by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the Iraqi government.

The agreement calls for Iraq to give U.N. weapons inspectors full access to eight presidential sites that had been declared off limits.

But exactly what will happen if Baghdad should fail to comply with the agreement was the focus of five days of tough negotiations between those on the Security Council who wanted to send the strongest of messages — United States and Britain — and those who oppose the use of force in this case — China, France and Russia.

The initial draft U.N. resolution drawn up by Britain warned of "the severest consequences." During the negotiations, Iraq was told it would have to face only "very serious consequences."

The final English text of the resolution returned to the original phrase omitting the definite article "the," which somewhat attenuated the threat.

The article was removed at China's request and only after more negotiations among experts, diplomats said.

The most famous semantic

France blocks NATO council warning to Iraq

BRUSSELS (AFP) — France Wednesday vetoed a NATO warning to Iraq of serious consequences if it did not comply with last month's U.N.-brokered arms inspection agreement, a NATO source said.

Drafted at the urging of the United States and Britain, the statement underlined the heavy sanctions Iraq would face if it did not go along with the agreement reached by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Baghdad last month, which defused the Iraqi arms inspection crisis.

All members of the NATO council, the alliance's highest political body, favoured the text except France, said the source, who asked not to be named.

France held that Monday's U.N. Security Council resolution 1154 warning Iraq was balanced and sufficient, saying the arms inspections agreement was still in its early stages.

Paris also thought such a statement by NATO, which was not involved in the Gulf crisis, could send a bad signal at a bad time, the source said.

NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana, in a statement earlier Wednesday, praised the U.N. Security Council resolution warning Iraq against violations.

"As the resolution notes, any violation by Iraq of its obligations would have the severest consequences," Mr. Solana said, adding that Iraq's compliance to its obligations would allow the Security Council to consider the lifting of sanctions in force against Iraq since the end of the 1990-91 Gulf war.

battle at the United Nations involved Resolution 242 of Nov. 22, 1967, which followed the six-day Arab-Israeli war.

The English phrase "withdrawal from occupied territories" was officially translated

into French with the ambiguous "des" [from or some], leading some diplomats to believe the text was referring to certain parts of the occupied territories.



ANOTHER HOME DEMOLISHED: Palestinians watch as an Israeli army bulldozer tears down the family home of Mohammad Ja'abari Wednesday. The family said the building, home to eight people, was demolished because it was built without a permit from the Israeli authorities (Reuters photo)

Israel's secret service also target of disinformation — report

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency, was misled by false reports from one of its agents about militant activities in the West Bank, the Haaretz newspaper reported Wednesday.

The incident, described as a "minor" scandal by Shin Bet officials, echoed a much more serious breach in the foreign intelligence service Mossad, which was misled for years by a senior agent who fabricated reports about Syria's peace intentions.

According to Haaretz, the senior Shin Bet agent in the northern West Bank, identified only by his first initial A, was caught two years ago exaggerating information he allegedly

collected from Palestinian informers.

The agent, considered a rising star in the agency due to the large number of Palestinian sources he claimed to have recruited, was caught and dismissed after he refused to let a bodyguard accompany him to a supposed meeting with one of his informers, the newspaper said.

Further investigation showed that the agent had fabricated or embellished his field reports to make his sources seem more valuable than they were, the Haaretz said.

In December Israeli officials announced the arrest of a leading Mossad agent, Yehuda Gil, for allegedly fabricating

reports for years from a supposed Syrian agent.

Gil systematically exaggerated the belligerent intentions of Syria in his reports, at one point in 1996 bringing the two countries to the brink of war, officials said.

Gil, a far-right militant, is currently on trial for endangering state security and other offences.

Shin Bet is responsible for counter-espionage and counter-terrorism in Israel and the Palestinian territories as well as for protecting government officials. The Mossad handles foreign intelligence gathering and operations.

Madonna wants daughter to have some company

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Pop star Madonna, 39, is letting it be known she wants her daughter, Lourdes Maria, to have some company. "I would love to have a brother or sister for Lola," said the Material Girl, referring to her 16-month-old daughter by her nickname. "I don't know when, but it'll happen." Madonna said her life has become "infinitely richer" with the birth of her child. "I feel like I'm starting my life all over in some way. My daughter's birth was like a rebirth for me." Lourdes Maria is the product of Madonna's relationship with Puerto Rican personal trainer Carlos Leon. She and Leon are no longer an item.

Charles to take William and Harry on Canada trip

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Prince Charles will take his sons William and Harry on an official visit to Canada later this month, followed by a short holiday, a spokesman said Tuesday. William, 15, and Harry, 13, will accompany their father for official engagements in Vancouver on March 23 and 24. They will then have a short skiing holiday in a nearby resort. Charles last visited Canada in April 1996, and was there in October 1991 with his then wife Diana, Princess of Wales, as well as William and Harry.

Relieving oneself maintains body temperature — Moore

PARIS (AFP) — Shaving her head was probably the least unlikely part when Demi Moore was making "G.I. Jane," where she plays a recruit in the elite Navy Seals. Moore says she knows no limits in preparing for the screen. Certainly, she stretched her own capacities with scenes for the film including hyper-physical endurance tests. One training exercise, she says, was how long she could endure in icy water. Suddenly she had to relieve herself. That's okay, a real Seals companion told her. Go right ahead. "People who do diving know that you can maintain your body temperature by relieving yourself," she explains.

Silence that dreadful phone, Othello fans are told

HONG KONG (R) — Othello's plea "silence that dreadful bell" took on new meaning when an actress in the Shakespeare play chided Hong Kong theatre-goers whose beeping mobile phones had disrupted a performance. British actress Maureen Beattie received the biggest applause of the evening when she issued an impassioned plea after the curtain call for people to switch off their phones in theatres. "Everyone cheered. I could not get them to stop," she said. She said half a dozen phone calls had wrecked the play at Hong Kong's Academy of Performing Arts. "One went off at the most poignant moment when Othello lifts up the dead Desdemona. You could hear a pin drop. Then it started ringing," she said.

Crocodile left 'home alone' in Paris hotel bath

PARIS (AFP) — A young Nile crocodile was left "home alone" in a Parisian hotel bathroom, French zoo officials said after they were called in by worried staff to look after the small reptile. The young croc — thought to be between six and eight months old — was shown off to hotel staff when its owner arrived but left behind when he checked out. It was discovered by a shocked chamber maid. Measuring just 61 cm, the baby snapper would normally be expected to grow to 5-metre in length.

U.S. sees low chance of any Iraqi attack

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. State Department said late on Tuesday it sees little probability of an attack by Iraq on its neighbours in the Gulf region, and considers the possibility of Iraq resorting to use of chemical or biological weapons remote.

In a public announcement issued after the Pentagon said it would start vaccinating all of its 36,000 troops in the Gulf against deadly anthrax, the department said such shots were not available to other U.S. citizens in the region.

"There is only a single source for the vaccine and it is our understanding that virtually all the vaccine produced is under defence department contract for primarily military use and a small number of other official uses," the department said.

But it stressed that the chance that such vaccinations would be needed was considered low.

"The best assessment currently available continues to be that there is a low probability of attack by Iraq and that the possibility of Iraq resorting to the use of chemical or biological weapons is remote, however, neither can be excluded," it said.

The State Department urged all Americans to "remain informed and make their own decisions regarding travel to the region."

Clinton salutes Annan for his success in closing Iraq deal

NEW YORK (R) — U.S. President Bill Clinton on Tuesday saluted United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the international diplomat's success in obtaining an agreement with Iraq over weapons inspections.

In remarks prepared for a Time magazine 75th anniversary celebration Tuesday night, Mr. Clinton hailed Mr. Annan, who was also expected to attend the event.

Referring to the United Nations, President Clinton said, "I salute its distinguished Secretary General Kofi Annan, here with us tonight."

"Backed by the credible threat of force, bearing an unequivocal message from the international community, the secretary general obtained Iraq's agreement to honour the U.N. resolutions on weapons inspections."

The president also reiterated his demand that Iraq live up to the agreement by complying with the U.N.

inspectors.

"The United Nations Security Council clearly and unanimously reiterated that demand last night. Now Iraq must match its words with deeds, its commitment with compliance... America and its partners must make sure that it does," Mr. Clinton said.

On a last-ditch mission to forestall a military clash over Iraq's refusal to grant U.N. weapons inspectors access to sensitive sites, Mr. Annan brokered an agreement, signed on Feb. 23, under which Baghdad agreed to permit the inspectors unlimited access to suspected sites of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons throughout Iraq.

Mr. Clinton cautiously endorsed the accord on the day it was signed, averting air strikes against Iraq for the time being.

But the Security Council on Monday said Iraq would face the "severest consequences" for any violation of the agreement, and the United States warned on

Tuesday that Iraq would face military action if it failed to honour its pledges.

In his speech on Tuesday night, Mr. Clinton also hailed former President Franklin Roosevelt, the Democrat who led America through the great depression and the World War II, as the personification of the "American century," ideal described by time founder Henry Luce. Mr. Clinton also said the ideal could continue into the next century.

"The advance of freedom has made this the American century," Mr. Clinton said. "The embodiment of this triumph — and the driving force behind it — was Franklin Roosevelt."

"What is required of us is still to follow his lead: to strengthen the bonds of union, widen the circle of opportunity and deepen the reach of freedom," Mr. Clinton said. "God willing, we will. Then the 21st century will be the next American century."

Romanian tanker blocked in Kuwait for violating embargo

BUCHAREST (AFP) — A Romanian oil-tanker chartered by a Greek arms manufacturer has been blocked in Kuwait for a month for breaching the U.N. embargo against Iraq, the ship's owners Navcom announced

Wednesday. The 5,000-tonne tanker was spotted sailing in Iranian waters by a U.S. ship and was ordered to dock in the port of Kuwait for inspections of its cargo, which turned out to be Iraqi oil.

Navcom head Elena Bontas explained that the tanker had first been chartered by a Greek arms manufacturer, Handy Sea Ship Management, which then hired out the ship to a company based in the United Arab Emirates, Tafaoul Foodstuff Trade.

"The responsibility for the violation of the embargo does not fall on Romania, but on the arms manufacturer currently using the tanker," contended a spokeswoman for the Romanian Foreign Ministry, Anda Filip.

Ms. Filip added that the owners of the vessel were not aware that it was carrying Iraqi oil.

She said Navcom stood to pay a fine and the cargo would be confiscated if the results of initial inspections were confirmed.

In February, the Romanian government, much to the Communist opposition's disgust, backed the threatened U.S.-led military strikes in the standoff between the United Nations and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein over weapons inspections.

Saudi prince calls for 'real' elections

BEIRUT (R) — In a rare public comment by a Saudi Arabian royal, Prince Talal Ben Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, half-brother of King Fahd, on Wednesday urged the kingdom and other Arab states to eventually hold "real" elections.

"Are we more backwards than other countries to hold elections that are cosmetic?" he said in an interview with Reuters. He spoke during a visit to Beirut to attend a UNESCO conference on higher education.

"What is required now is the development of the Shura Council until we reach a stage in which the kingdom of Saudi Arabia can hold real and authentic elections," said the prince, the most liberal member of the ruling Al Saud dynasty.

He was referring to Saudi Arabia's appointed consultative Shura Council, a 90-man body of businessmen, academics and retired military officers who debate topics selected by the king.

Prince Talal, father of billionaire mega-investor Prince Al Waleed Ben Talal, spoke frankly about the need for gradual democracy in the Arab World.

"Some countries have elections. But the elections are cosmetic. They amount to decorations for the outside world. Do

you want these kinds of elections?" he said.

Prince Talal gained attention in the 1960s when he led a group of liberal Saudi princes seeking reforms in the austere kingdom, which until today has no political parties. He was forced to move to Egypt but again lives in Saudi Arabia.

Prince Talal has very limited influence in Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer and exporter and a powerful player in Middle Eastern politics.

King Fahd vowed after the 1990-91 Gulf crisis to gradually introduce political and economic reforms. He launched the Shura Council in 1993, but power rests firmly with the Al Saud family.

Prince Talal pointed to King Fahd's promise and stressed the Shura Council should be used to give ordinary Saudis a greater say in the kingdom's daily affairs.

"This plan, in my opinion, if the situation continues, it will lead to elections. I prefer them later rather than now. Now is not the time. I don't believe we are ready. The Arab countries that have elections, do you think they have real parliaments?" he asked.

"The majority in Saudi Arabia, like the majority in other Arab countries, prefer gradual steps towards a demo-

cratic life. If the citizen can express an opinion and take part in decisions in one way or another, that is what is important," said Prince Talal, dressed in a smart suit in his seaside hotel suite.

Asked if he hoped for a future role in Saudi politics, Prince Talal said: "The structure of the Saudi system is different than the outside world... these are customs and customs are stronger than laws."

"The small man respects the big man. And the big man listens to the little man. We are moving in this way. There are differences of opinion and this is healthy," he added.

King Fahd suffered a stroke in November 1995, raising questions over the succession. However, Prince Talal said the king was healthy: "I had lunch with him last Friday. His health is good now. He is undertaking his daily work."

Prince Talal denied Western media predictions that Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah would have a power struggle with Defence Minister Prince Sultan when he eventually takes over.

"There are two leaderships in Saudi Arabia, the king and the crown prince. There is agreement. And the other brothers, including Prince Sultan, agree. There are no problems," he said.

Egypt fears militant attacks 'at any moment'

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Interior Minister Habib Al Adli said Wednesday the country's security services fear that an Islamist attack could occur at any moment.

"I believe that [the Muslim militants] are in a weak position because they have taken very hard blows during the long and tough confrontation" with the security services, General Adli said in an interview published Wednesday in the government weekly Al

Mussawar.

"Their structure is broken and from now on there are only scattered elements hidden in various areas. But does this mean that this business is over?" he asked.

"We expect a terrorist operation at any moment, because it's a cowardly act which anyone may carry out," he added, calling for "vigilance" by the security services.

The interior minister estimated that "100" Islamists "carry

out terrorist operations such as murders and sabotage."

He said there is no exact figure for the number of people involved in "the second circle" of Islamists, "those who believe in their ideas but do not bear arms."

The general also said that there are at least 10,000 political prisoners in Egyptian prisons, while the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights put the number at 16,000.



WEIZMAN STAYS: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, right, holds his head in his hand as Trade and Industry Minister Natan Sharansky speaks to him during the voting session for Israeli president at the Knesset Wednesday. Incumbent President Ezer Weizman defeated Shaul Amot, a candidate from Mr. Netanyahu's ruling Likud Party. (see story on page 1) (AP photo)